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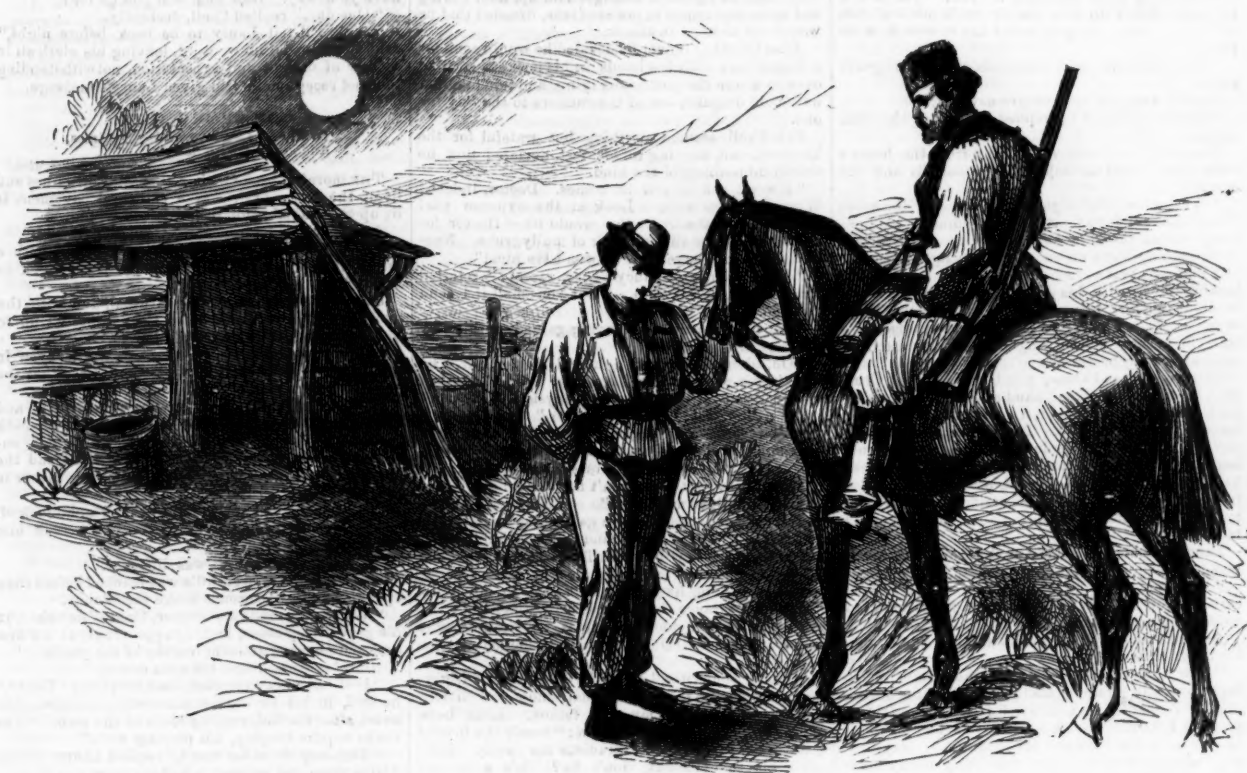
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[BY MOONLIGHT ALONE.]

FICKLE FORTUNE.

By the Author of "Maurice Durant," etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

The violets, cowslips, and the primroses
Bear to my closet. Cymbeline.
Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs.
Goldsmith.

CECIL'S little room adjoined the apartments belonging to the two old women of whom we have spoken.

This room, a natty, pretty little apartment—notwithstanding the extreme plainness of the furniture, was set aside exclusively for the lad, who had a key to it and kept it locked.

The cattle-runners slept in the hay-loft, or, in the warm weather, beneath the trees in the open air, but Cecil, both in size, appearance, age, and general manners, was evidently and allowedly superior to all of them, excepting perhaps Laurence Harman; his bed was of the ordinary kind and was fitted with snowy sheets and the luxury of curtains.

Cecil amongst other little weaknesses was fond of flowers—passionately or "womanishly" fond, as Mr. Stewart had said, and a bunch of the gloriously coloured and wondrously scented earth's jewels generally stood in a brown deep jar upon the table of the little room.

Sometimes when Laurence Harman returned from one of his long trips he would bring the lively Cecil a bunch of some rare or particularly beautiful flowers, and, with the same grave carelessness throw them to him as he had done the rug.

On such occasions the lad always crimsoned with pleasure and darted off to his room.

However fresh the flowers might be that filled the jar, they were always thrown out to make room for Laury's bunch, and that bunch when faded and withered was carefully removed, dried, and stored away in the top drawer of the plain deal chest which stood in the room.

When that drawer was opened the scent of the

dried flowers would steal out and fill the apartment with a subtle perfume—a perfume that Cecil would stand and drink in with strange delight.

On the night of the strange scene at the cliff Cecil had flown to his room, after the half-swoon, and remained there till the farm was at rest.

The incident had been a warning to him in more ways than one, and the result which followed was a determination to avoid for the future, as much as possible, the runner Laury.

Thus determined, the lad sat by the window with his little dimpled chin on his hands and his dark, heavy-browed eyes scanning the horizon.

The farm was at rest, and it was time Cecil, if he meant to be clear-headed at his books on the morrow, was a-bed, but he sat thinking and frowning till the moon was up.

Then, as with a sigh he turned from the window, the sound of a horse's hoofs came to.

"Oh, he is off again," he murmured, peeping through the blind at the plainly revealed figure of Laurence Harman fastening the saddle girths of the Black.

"How long will he be away?" mused the youth. "How long? A month, I suppose. Well, he can be away longer if he likes for what I care," he murmured, defiantly, but sighed nevertheless.

Presently, as he still watched, he saw the runner leap into the saddle and dash off.

Before he was out of sight, however, Cecil saw him pull up and turn back.

"Forgotten something," he murmured. "That's wonderful for him."

Laurence rode back faster than he had galloped away, and, with that wonderful twist of the wrist, brought the powerful horse to a standstill right beneath the window from which Cecil was looking.

"What is it, I wonder?" he murmured. "Why," as footsteps could be heard coming up the stairs with that attempt at silence so provokingly futile, "powder or ballets. He is going to the armoury."

But, contrary to his surmise, the footsteps stopped at the door and Laurence knocked.

The youth flushed a bright crimson, then turned deadly pale, glancing at the key and pressing his hand to his breast.

The knock was repeated, and he answered it.

"Well, who is it?"

"I, Laurence," was the reply.

"What do you want?"

"I want to speak to you. Are you in bed?"

"Yes—that is no," replied Cecil. "Is anything the matter? Go downstairs and wait by the horse and I will come to you."

The footsteps descended, and waiting a moment to glance at the glass with a sharp, questioning gaze—Cecil was vain for a boy—he unclosed the door and cautiously tripped down the stairs.

Laurence had mounted again and was waiting for him.

Cecil went up to him timidly, notwithstanding the assumption of ease and superiority upon his pretty face, and said:

"Well, what is it? This is a fine time of night to disturb any one," and he looked up impudently at the stern, grave face above him, upon which the moon was shedding a clear, soft light.

"Lad," said the cattle-runner, looking down upon him sadly, but with a majestic kind of dignity that well befitted the grave, handsome face—"lad, I couldn't go away to-night without telling you that you were right and I was wrong to-day. I had forgotten myself, and played the coward, the braggart, and the lunatic. You brought me back to my senses with that look of yours, and I am grateful."

He smiled—the apology seemed strange, and its strangeness struck him even as he made it, but it was right and due, notwithstanding all its strangeness. And Laurence had very queer notions as to right, and always paid his debts.

"Well?" said Cecil, laying his hand on the horse's neck and looking up with a provoking laugh. "And have you called me up to tell me that stale news, Mr. Grim?"—(it was a strange, girlish habit the lad had of calling those he liked by fanciful but appropriate nicknames.)

Laurence smiled. "Of course it was wrong," continued Cecil, with a shake of the head and the same smile. "You'd no right to risk your neck for the sake of breaking that idiot Tim's. As to being a lunatic, well, you know best about that."

"Aye," said Laurence, curtly.

"And why are you going off in this harem-scarem way? Is the night too good for you to stay here?"

"If one cannot sleep, it is ill to waste time by lying idle," Cecil, replied Laurence.

"Oh, lying idle," retorted the lad; "you are a fortunate fellow to call taking one's natural rest idleness. Pray, do you never know what it is to rest?"

"Very seldom," said Laurence, with his grave smile.

"Oh! And perhaps you are never tired?"

"Often—always," he replied, gathering the reins tighter.

The lad did not remove his hand from the horse's neck; he seemed to enjoy the moonlight and the chat.

"What a beautiful night it is, Laurence," he said; "I almost envy you. It must be fine to scamper away across the hills and in the forest, with the moon shining down on one," and he sighed.

"You are better in bed, lad," said the runner, looking down with his sad yet kindly smile; "you would catch cold, being so slight and girlish. Why, what hands are these for holding the reins in a thirty-mile run," and he caught the little white hand with his strong brown one.

"Leave my hand alone, you bear," retorted Cecil, snatching the imprisoned hand away with an indignant flush; "it is as clever, if not as strong, as yours, for all your impudence. There! I had forgotten to scold you for calling me down, and now"—pretending to yawn, "I am too tired to do it. It shall keep until you come back; and, pray, when will that be?" he asked, with a feigned indifference, but looking with an almost anxious glance at Laurence's face.

Laurence shook his head and threw off the hair which had blown against his forehead.

"Who can tell?" he said, lightly. "Not I. Who cares? Not I, again; and I'm sure you do not, lad, so let the Black and me go."

And he laid his hand, with another smile, upon Cecil's shoulder.

"How do you know?" retorted the youth, mockingly, and still retaining his light grasp of the horse's neck. "Perhaps I am not so indifferent as you think, perhaps I want some one to give me a helping hand in managing the boys and Mr. Stewart. Nay, I do in all seriousness, for they are dreadfully unruly sometimes, and will not obey me half so well as they do you. Laury, why do you waste your time playing the unaccusable bear? I asked you before, but you would not tell me; come, tell me now. I can keep a secret, never fear," he added, the last rather significantly.

Laurence looked away with a darkened face, but as if willing to humour the lad, turned his face to him again, and said, with a smile:

"Question breeds question, lad. Suppose I ask you what brought you to such a pass as keeping the books of an African cattle station? What would be the answer? Not that I want to know—"

"'Tis lucky," retorted Cecil, who had retreated within the shadow of the horse as the question was asked, and lowered his eyes, but raised them now as roguishly as before to answer, "'tis lucky you do not, for I would answer—Nothing."

"See then, lad, how little right you have to question me," retorted Laurence, with a grave air.

And, setting spurs to his horse, he sprang forward, but before quite out of sight he looked round and waved his hand.

The youth, who had gazed after him with a strange, wistful look upon his face—fearing, perhaps, that he had given offence—brightened up at the signal of farewell and walked moodily back to the farm.

Cecil was a singular youth, and anything but manly, as you would have said if you could have seen him kissing the flowers which Laurence had just given him, with tears in his eyes and a slight quivering of the lip.

CHAPTER XVIII

Joy rises in me like a summer morn. Coleridge.

A FEW days after Cecil fell ill, not seriously, but enough to keep him to his room, which he obstinately refused to unlock, and from which he refused to budge, stating to Mr. Stewart that he should be all right on the morrow, and that all the medicine he wanted was a little quiet and a day's skulking.

The settler, who had grown wondrously fond of the wilful boy, would have doctored him after the cattle-runner fashion, i.e., with a decoction of strong

herbs and rum, but thought it better to let the lad have his way for one day and not be badgered.

On the morrow, true to the prophecy, Cecil came down, but looked so pale and weak that the settler refused to let him work, and to prevent him getting to the books, locked the armoury door.

Left to idleness, the youth went and lay down under the trees, and half dozed the day away, taking only some milk porridge which old Martha brought him in a wooden bowl.

The settler was troubled. He did not want his little clerk and general manager laid up, and, having had some experience in prairie-fever, dreaded that he was about to have an attack.

After thinking it over he decided he would send for a doctor, and, with his hands in his pockets, strolled over to where the youth was lying, and told him that he should despatch one of the runners to the Bay for one.

But Cecil seemed anything but grateful for the kindness, and, starting to his feet, declared that he should do nothing of the kind.

"I won't see him if he comes. Doctor, indeed! Why, I'm quite well. Look at the expense too! Pretty soon the books that would be—Doctor for Master Cecil for slight attack of mulligrubs. Nonsense; I won't have him. I won't see him!"

"Won't you, you saucy young rascal?" retorted Mr. Stewart, with a grin. "But you shall if I send for him."

Cecil turned pale, and, having gained nothing by defiance, tried coaxing.

"Oh, don't send for a horrid doctor, sir," he said, in his winning, pleading way. "I do hate 'em so, and I'd never take the easy physic. Oh, don't send for him; there's no good master."

"Well, well—drat the boy," muttered Stewart—very much as Squire Darrell had growled, when vanquished by his niece, Miss Grace. "Well, I'll wait till to-morrow, but if you ain't better I'll have him—physic and all, so mind you."

That night Laurence came galloping back.

Cecil, hearing the clatter and the usual hubbub, got out of bed and saw him wearily dismount from the Black.

In the morning he was much better—so much indeed in appearance that he entered the little office where he always took his meals. Mr. Stewart, who was seated there talking to Laurence, looked up with surprise.

"Hullo, youngster," he said, "the doctor's frightened you, has he? Well, we shall know how to cure you for the future, my fine fellow. Look here, Laury," taking Cecil by the arm; "here's the invalid I was speaking about contradicts me pretty nicely with his rosy cheeks, don't he? It's a regular swindle! Here have I been and got up a nice breakfast to tempt his appetite and all. I'll be bound he could eat a house."

Cecil made some saucy answer and sat down to the breakfast, a delicate and tempting one of sweetbreads, crisp white bread and new milk.

Laury looked at him kindly.

"Haven't you been well, Cecil?"

"Yes," retorted Cecil, "quite well, thank you; how have you been?"

"The only complaint he's got you see is manners," laughed Mr. Stewart, perching himself on the stool and watching the boy eat his breakfast with a nice air of proprietorship.

Laury smiled.

"I'm glad it's no worse," he said.

Then they continued the conversation in a low undertone, of which Cecil—though he kept his ears open with that curiosity of which we have said he had considerable share—could catch only a word here and there.

But these scraps made sharper his desire to hear more, and he resolved to pounce on Laurence—if he could—at the first opportunity.

At last the conversation was concluded, seemingly by Laurence carelessly assenting to some proposal of the settler's, and the two left the room.

Having finished his breakfast, Cecil sat down to his books and, as might be expected, soon lost his rosy looks.

Presently Mr. Stewart came in.

"Hullo," said he, "you've got at the books, have you—and got chalk-checked again? But you can shut the accounts up. Laury's offered to take you with him buck hunting, he says, and I think that it'll do you good."

The youth's face crimsoned with pleasure, but he pointed:

"Oh, indeed," said he, "it's very kind of Laury, to be sure. But how long is he going to be away?" he asked, sharply.

"Oh, I'm sure I can't tell you," laughed Mr. Stewart. "Who knows when to reckon upon Laury? Two or three days perhaps."

"I can't go then," said Cecil, decisively.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Stewart.

"Because I won't," said Cecil. "I can't leave the books, they're behindhand already."

"Oh, bother the books," said Mr. Stewart. "You needn't bother about 'em if I don't. Leave them."

"I won't," retorted Cecil. "I know my duty and I'll do it. I don't want to have you turning over my wages at the end of the quarter and thinking I haven't earned them."

"Oh, sir," laughed Stewart, "you're uncommon particular—most uncommon. Well, lad, you must have your way. How long will you go for?"

"One day," replied Cecil, decidedly.

"Well, I'll tell Laury to be back before night," said Stewart, and he went off, leaving his clerk all in a glow of delight and expectation, notwithstanding the cool reception he had given Laury's message.

CHAPTER XIX.

To business we love we rise betimes,
And go to 't with delight.

Antony and Cleopatra.

THE morning broke with a thousand opal hues and lit up the flower prairie as a cathedral pavement is lit up by the reflection of its stained windows.

At six o'clock Laurence and Cecil had started.

The boy looked well enough this morning with a bright flash on his soft cheeks and a joyous look in his dark, deep eyes.

Laurence seemed as grave as usual, and with the exception of a cold nod when Cecil catered up to him he had taken no notice of him.

Laurence was not a man to waste words even in asking after another's health. He could see that the youth was better and spared himself the inquiry.

Cecil was silent too, but happy, wonderfully and mysteriously happy, and his head was thrown back with that peculiar air of freedom which one unconsciously wears when the heart is light and the blood properly circulating—or careering rather in this case—through the veins.

Cecil was young, though not so young as he looked, and whatever trouble he may have had struck him but lightly.

With his companion it was different.

The edge of the high hills was reached before they spoke, and then Laurence broke the silence.

"Why do you not ride oftener, Cecil?" he asked, in his grave, deep tones, looking approvingly at the firm seat and fearless, graceful bearing of the youth.

He coloured and cast his eyes down.

"I—I have not overmuch time for riding, Laury," he said, in his sweet, feminine voice, inexpressibly sweet after the full, ringing tones of the man. "The books require keeping, not playing with."

"You keep them too much," replied Laury, curtly. "Give them and yourself a holiday now and then."

Cecil shook his hair, which had been short when he came to the Corner, but had grown with marvellous rapidity and hung in natural half-rings beneath his collar.

"What would become of the Corner if the books were neglected?—You forget I have all the past to catch up: I do bother 'em in my mind sometimes, but I must do my duty. You told me that you know?" And he looked up at his companion's face inquiringly.

"True, yet I did not tell you it was your duty to work your face sad and your heart heavy," replied Laurence.

"Never fear," replied the youth. "I've done neither. Look at me!" he exclaimed, with a silver laugh. "Do I look white-faced or heavy-hearted?"

Laurence half turned and looked at him, and seemed struck by his beauty—for it was nothing more nor less.

"You are a good-looking boy," he said, quietly, and with his sad smile, "but dreadfully green. Come, use your spurs we have far to ride," and he urged his Black, with a word, into a swifter pace.

Cecil, who had cowered and shrank under the gaze and the speech, obeyed, and they flew onward.

"What are we going for this morning?" he asked, presently.

"Deer," replied Laurence.

"Oh, is that all?" said Cecil. "I thought Mr. Stewart said we were to hunt."

Laurence smiled faintly.

"And is not antelope stalking hunting?" he asked, "or do you want higher and fiercer game? Why, lad, what can such a wee morsel of humanity care for higher sport?"

Cecil fired up.

"We mortals are no less brave than you great, hulking fellows are, let me tell you, Mr. Laury," he said, with a defiant laugh. "You giants always think you have swallowed all the courage to 'em had. Antelopes indeed! Why, I'd as soon follow the Dale hounds."

Laurence pulled up his horse with a sudden jerk. The clatter of the horse's hoofs must have given the lad's words the wrong sound, surely.

"What bounds did you say?" he asked, almost sternly.

"What bounds? Why, any bounds," retorted the lad quickly, but with an averted face. "I said I would as soon follow barehounds as gallop down antelope. I wanted an elephant, a lion, a tiger with a skin like that one you were kind enough to give me."

Laurence, who had again put spurs to his horse, laughed grimly.

"You have a big heart for such a small body," he said, with easy good nature; "keep that beast of yours to it, and if we come across the game you seem so anxious for, lad, we will try our hands at it."

They rode on in silence for some little time, when suddenly Laurence stopped, and, dinging himself from the saddle, commenced scanning the ground.

"What is it?" asked Cecil.

Laurence held up his hand.

"No talking now," he said. "The herd have passed this way; they have gone to a well, down south yonder, to drink. We must go round," and he leapt into the saddle again.

Cecil's eyes flashed and his breath came fast, but mindful of the injunction he kept his lips closed and followed Laurence, who was now making in a circuitous way for the place he had indicated with his finger.

After a quarter of an hour's ride they came upon a patch of forest.

Laurence held up his finger to enforce silence and checked his steed.

Cecil, following him, did the same, and, obeying a gesture, came to his side.

Laurence took the spare gun he had brought and held it out to the lad.

But Cecil turned rather pale and shook his head.

The cattle-runner smiled grimly, as if he would say—"Where is your courage now?" and was about to take it back, but the youth flushed up at the hint and caught the rifle.

Laurence nodded curtly, and with his own on his right hand went on again.

When they had got within the wondrously beautiful forest of trees and creeping plants that faced and interlaced each other with fairy-like grace and colour he dismounted, and, throwing the bridles over the horses' necks—they required no other securing—he dropped on his hands and knees and crawled with the swiftness and noiselessness of an Indian towards the patch of silvery-like water at which he knew he should find his game.

Cecil more slowly, but with a faster-beating heart, followed in like manner.

Presently, after a few yards, Laurence stopped, and pulling away some drooping branches pointed with his finger.

Cecil approached, and looking through the cleared space felt that delicious sensation of delight which those and only those have experienced who have crept upon their first herd of antelopes.

There they were, a herd of a hundred or more, splendid, noble creatures, graceful and fleet of foot, drinking with that cautious, watchful air their species always have.

Cecil almost fancied they would hear and take fright at the beating of his heart. It seemed to him to elick with the noise and regularity of an eight-day clock.

Laurence bent his lips to the youth's ear.

"Who's to have the first shot?" he asked, carelessly.

Cecil's eyes trembled.

"Me, please," he murmured—disregarding grammar.

Laurence nodded and smiled.

"You must not miss," he whispered. "Wait here and I will drive them for you," and he crept away noiselessly.

Presently Cecil heard the whiz of a stone, and saw it fall behind the herd.

Never guessing that the stone could have come from any direction save the one in which it had dropped, at their backs, they raised their heads with a startled gaze, and snuffing—of course Laurence and Cecil were to windward of them—fled to the forest and to the muzzle of the deadly rifle.

Cecil waited, half blind with excitement, until the foremost had passed his ambush, then fired; he could not see with what success, but before the smoke had cleared away the sharp crack of Laurence's rifle rang in the air and a noble buck leapt up and then dropped dead.

Cecil sprang to his feet, but Laurence's warning voice caused him to drop again, and the next moment there came another crack, and another buck bit the dust.

Then Laurence came from out of his hiding-place and called him.

"Well," he said, mockingly, "what's your game?"

Cecil coloured.

"I don't know," he said; "I didn't see—Here, take your nasty gun," and gave it to him with a vexed post.

Laurence smiled again.

"But," he said, "don't be thrown back, Cecil, lad; it was a first shot I know. Come, own it—you never had a gun to your hands before?"

The youth looked up with a sharp glance.

"You're wrong you see—I have," he said, and with a sudden change of colour, this time almost to a pallor, knelt down to look at the slain bucks.

Laurence secured the skins and cut some steaks. The rest of the carcasses was left to the bird-seekers who were already darkening the air.

They found the horses where they had left them, and after disposing of the skins behind Laurence's saddle, they mounted and rode on.

"Where are we going to now?" asked Cecil.

"To the hat that lies three miles on to dine and stow the skins," said Laurence.

They skirted the forest and made for the prairie again, riding on until they came to a low range of hills, barren, and at the foot of it half-sheltered by a few trees, and commanding a fine view of the immense flower slope, stood a small rough wood-hut.

They stopped here, and Laurence, unfastening the door, told Gracie to alight.

The youth with eager curiosity jumped to the ground and ran to the door.

Looking in he saw that the interior of the hut contained a rough deal table, a block of wood for chair, some tin and iron cooking-pans, and a lantern. Several wooden pegs were driven round the walls for guns and clothing, and in a corner a heap of dry undergrowth and hay was thrown.

Laurence stowed the skins in a corner, and then said:

"Come in, lad, and sit down, the lion's will take their rest."

The youth came in and still looked round him.

"What a romantic, queer little place," he said. "It is like Robinson Crusoe's cave. Who does it belong to—whose is it?"

"Yours, any one's who may need it," replied Laurence, who had been busy lighting a fire and setting the steaks going.

"By that I guess it belongs to you," said the boy, sharply. "Did you build it?"

"Yes," said Laurence. "This I call my den. It is too good a one for such a bear as I am, ay, lad?"

Cecil turned away with a vexed air.

"You will never forget that foolish word of mine, Laury," he said, almost sorrowfully.

"Tut, tut, Cecil," retorted Laurence, with a smile. "I did not mean to vex you. Here, come and help me turn the steaks, and I'll get you some water. I suppose you haven't got over your dislike to strong liquor yet."

Cecil shook his head with a merry laugh.

"No," he said, turning the steak. "I can't bear your nasty brandy; get me the water, there's a good Laury."

Laurence rose, and can in hand left the hut.

No sooner had he gone than the youth sprang from his knees and gazed devoutly round at every inch of the hut.

"His house, his home, poor, and Laury—poor Laury," he murmured. "And yet I—I—would give something to share it with him," he added, with a wild blush, and fell to the steaks again.

Laurence returned.

"Here's the water, and as clear as crystal. And the steaks, lad, are they done? Tust, you have burnt one. 'T would serve thee right to make thee out it."

But he took it on his own iron plate, and picked out the tenderest and best for Cecil, who, after an unheeded remonstrance, fell to heartily.

Laurence ate in silence, Cecil also, but occasionally lifting his dark eyes with a half-questioning, half-dreamy gaze to the handsome tanned face of his companion.

When dinner was finished, Laurence washed the plates—it was not all romance—put them away again, then, lighting his pipe at the embers of the dying fire, flung himself at full length upon the bed of flowers outside the hut.

Cecil dragged the log of wood to the door, and sitting so that he could lean back against the hut watched the wreaths of smoke curling from the fragrant pipe.

A low feast from them the horses were cropping the sweet grass in the shade of the trees.

"Laury," said Cecil, suddenly, "you should always smoke; you look happier with a pipe in your mouth. Why, I wonder?"

Laurence turned himself and laid his head upon his elbow.

"You are a queer boy, Cecil," he said, with a grave

smile. "Why do you watch my face so closely?"

Cecil looked on the ground.

"I don't watch your face, Laury," he said. "At least—well, I couldn't help seeing it if it's right before me, you know. Besides, a cat may look at a king, and you're not a king, you know."

The cattle-runner nodded.

"No," he said. "But I am as free—as yet," he added, suddenly, and with a strange shadow darkening his brow.

The youth noticed the addendum, but had learned enough of Laury's nature to know that if he wanted to know anything respecting his affairs, the way not to learn was to ask point blank.

So, though he longed to ask him what he meant, he beat round the bush, like a woman.

"You seem to value your liberty at a very high price, Laury," he said, putting his hands behind his head, and swinging back that he might fix his eye upon the thoughtful face in a comfortable attitude.

Laurence nodded.

"Ay," he said, curtly. "At a higher price than you can guess, lad. I lost more than gold for this life of liberty and solitude."

And he swept his hand, with a quiet grace, towards the prairie.

Cecil's brows knit.

"One would think you had been a slave to hear you talk," he said—"a slave like Trottie, and Maf, and the rest of them at the station."

Laurence frowned.

"Ay, Cecil," he said, with a solemn sadness. "I was near being worse than those poor creatures; they were slaves against their will. I was almost consenting to slavery, and worse."

Cecil looked puzzled.

"And you ran away?" he asked. "Poor Laury."

"Ay—poor Laury, indeed," he replied, rising as he spoke with a strange laugh. "I ran away and left the dearest old home man ever knew, left kith and kin and all one's friends for freedom, Cecil, boy—for freedom."

The youth watched him as he shook himself like a huge dog and called to the horses.

"And yet," he said, not moving from his indolent, easy position, "you are nearly losing it again."

Laurence turned sharply.

"Who says that?" he asked.

"You did—yourself," retorted Cecil, softly. "You said I am free—as a king—as yet."

"Did I?" said Laurence, curtly.

"Yes," said Cecil. "What did you mean, Laury? Do tell me."

Laurence paused in what he was doing to the horses and turned to him, resting his arm on the Black's neck and speaking almost to himself as he fixed his eyes upon the boy's handsome face.

"Cecil, boy," he said, "you are inquisitive; a month ago, lad, and I should have given you a sharp answer, but—but—well, Cecil, I cannot tell the why or wherefore, but my heart has softened to you—to you only mind—and I feel as I would rather not feel, for Laurence Harman can hope for no friendship with man or boy while his heart is as heavy as it is. Lad, tell me by what sorcery you have made me like you?"

He broke off with a sudden smile that was like a flash of sunshine across his face notwithstanding its half-regretful sadness.

Cecil rose and walked to his horse, standing with his face turned away.

"I don't know," he replied, with a hesitating softness. "Except it is that I like you, Laury. You have been kind to me, you know."

Laurence shook his head.

"It isn't that, boy," he said. "I cannot discover the secret spell that links us in my heart, but when I am lying in the hut yonder, solitary and silent, and the wolves are howling across the watchfire, I think of you then and wish I had you with me. Cecil, they say down in the village where I was born that if kin and kin meet unawares the heart will find its own. I'm thinking"—and he smiled with a kindly mockery—"I'm thinking we must be kith and kin, or my heart is playing the old dame's proverb false."

Cecil turned his pale face—it had grown pale and moved as if by strong emotion.

"We are not kith or kin," he said, brokenly.

"We are but friends, Laury."

"Ay, that is it," said Laurence, with a sigh, and rousing himself he went and fastened the hut door.

"That is it, Cecil, we are friends," and he held out his hand.

It was a strange, remarkable thing for Wild Laury to do, and the youth seemed almost too surprised to grasp it. However, with a bright blush he took the big brown hand and tried to squeeze it in his little palm.

Laurence smiled.

"It is long since this hand of mine has pressed another's," he said, grimly, and added: "And never such a little one as yours, lad."

Then they rode on, Laurence settling himself into

the saddle, and, as if feeling that he had relaxed more than he liked, fell into a deep silence, his face relapsing into its old gloom and reserve.

CHAPTER XX.

The blood more stirs
To rouse a lion than to start a hare.

King Henry IV.

ANTELOPES were scarce, and of other game there seemed none, though Laurence often bent low in his saddle to discover some indication of the tracks of wild animals.

He never made any remark after these examinations, and Cecil, on whom a silence as deep and unbroken as Laurence's own had fallen, did not ask him. They rode on as quickly and noiselessly as they could through the tangled forests until noon had passed.

Then suddenly Cecil uttered a low cry, and Laurence, looking round, saw that he had gone pale and seemed about to fall from the horse.

He dismounted at once, and caught him.

"What is the matter, Cecil?" he asked; but for the moment Cecil could not answer.

Presently, however, he opened his eyes, and smiling, but not very bravely, said:

"I—don't know. I felt giddy, and—and—I think I fainted."

"Aye," said Laurence, whose brows were knit with anxious self-reproach. "You have ridden too far, poor lad. Your good looks misled me."

"No, no," exclaimed Cecil, eagerly. "No, no, Laury, I am not tired; the ride has not been too long—nay, all too short. But I have been faint, and the sun is hot. Oh, don't look so sad and self-reproachful—it's no fault but my own. There, there, I'm all right again," and, with a laugh, he made a movement to the horse.

But Laurence shook his head.

"You cannot mount yet, Cecil; you are weaker than you think—your face is quite pale, and your hand is cold—yes, like ice. You must sit down here upon this bank while I go for some water; there should be a stream here."

"Will not brandy do as well?" asked Cecil, with a very unmanly nervousness at the idea of being left alone in the huge forest.

Laurence shook his head. He had a suspicion, a sad, very sad one, that the handsome, winning boy who had crept into his heart had caught the native fever. If so, brandy would be fatal.

"No," he said, "brandy would do you no good. You must wait here till I return. I will not be a minute. Come, lad, I'm loth to leave you, but I must get water for thee."

Cecil tried to look cheerful, and Laurence brought the gun and laid it by his side.

"See," he said, "here's the nasty gun. You won't want it, but it'll help to keep that quicksilver courage of yours up, lad, till I come back."

He spoke cheerfully, almost banteringly; but, as he said, he was loth to leave the youth, and as he sprang into the thicket with his horn cup in his hand he stopped to look round.

Cecil, who seemed to read the look, called up an encouraging smile, and Laurence disappeared.

The stream he had expected to find lay a little to the right, and he had to fight his way through the dense undergrowth to it—a matter of hard work and some little time.

However, water he must have, for he feared that Cecil would faint again.

Cecil leant his head against the tree and closed his eyes. The faintness had gone, but he felt weak and giddy.

His bright, rosy looks had been, as Laurence had self-accusingly said, deceptive. He was not so strong as he looked, and the excitement of the antelope stalk, added to the long ride, had overcome him.

Still, as he sat thus, half dreaming and unconscious, his brain was going over word for word of Laurence's confession.

"We are friends—we should be kith and kin" brought a soft, sweet pleasure to Cecil, a pleasure that sent the colour back to the face again and set his heart beating.

"We are friends—poor Laury," murmured Cecil, and added, with a naive sigh that would have puzzled Laurence had he heard it and seen the accompanying look—"poor Cecil!"

Laurence was longer than he had expected him to be, and, feeling better, he was anxious for his return.

The sudden faintness had gone, and he was about to raise his voice to cry out, when a sudden rustling in the bushes behind him struck him dumb and brought him sharp round.

What he saw there turned his heart to stone and his face to the colour of marble—two great blazing eyes fixed on his with a bloodthirsty ferocity!

For a second—that seemed an age—Cecil stood

glued to the spot, staring at the fearful spots of fire.

Then, as the heart seemed to beat again, he opened his lips and uttering one piercing cry, turned and fled.

The next moment the animal sprang from the bushes with an answering yell, and would have been upon the lad's back, but Laurence sprang from the bush at the side and received it full upon his chest.

Man and beast went down like lead, and then ensued a struggle for dear life.

Laurence had drawn his bowie knife as the shriek had pierced his ear, and used it.

The panther, however, had got his arm down, and was clawing at his bare breast.

With the blood streaming from his forehead, which the brute had scraped, and half blinding him, Laurence fought madly to get the arm released, and at last—that is, in the course of a second or so—managed to swing the long, shining blade back and drive it up to the hilt in the throat of the animal.

With one last yell it shook its spotted head and fell right over him, dead!

Laurence crawled to his feet, wiped the blood from his face, and called faintly for Cecil.

No answer came, and struck to the heart with the chill of a fearful dread that the panther had perhaps attacked the youth before, he thundered forward, and calling and shouting beat the bush like a madman.

Then he heard a frightened moan, and, springing to the spot whence it proceeded, saw the girlish figure of the youth crouching at the foot of a tree.

Laurence knelt down and called him by name, still wiping the blood from his face, but the lad seemed half senseless with fright.

Presently, however, he came round, and then, with a revulsion of feeling, threw his arm round Laurence's neck, crying and sobbing that he, Laurence, saved his life, and that he was the dearest, bravest man that ever existed.

But, feeling the warm blood upon his face, he fell back with a cry of horror, and clapped his hands before his eyes.

"Oh, oh, oh!" he cried, "you are hurt! Oh, Laury, Laury, look at the blood! You are hurt—you are hurt!"

Laurence laughed to reassure him, and from its rarity—for it was the first time he had ever heard Laury's laugh—he withdrew his hands, and, still with a shudder of horror, clung to Laurence's arm.

"Oh, what shall we do—what shall we do?" he moaned. "Look at your face and your breast. Oh, dear, good Laury!"

And, much to Laurence's consternation, he burst out crying.

Laurence, more moved at the sight of the lad's tears than all his wounds—and some of them were not trifling—caught him by the hand.

"Don't cry, for Heaven's sake, Cecil," he said. "Come, we must get away quickly—to the hut."

He spoke with difficulty, and Cecil, suddenly plucking up, not a little helped therein by the sight of Laurence's bleeding wounds, ran forward and caught the horses, the poor animals having been terror-stricken by the sight of their common enemy, and being too much encumbered by their bridles, which had caught in the thick tangle, to escape.

Laurence got into the saddle, but with difficulty.

Cecil was suddenly and marvellously calm, but kept his eyes as much as possible from the blood.

"Oh, let us ride for life," he said, imploringly.

"Let us get to the hut, Laury."

And Laurence, smiling still but silent, led the way.

They had been tracking round almost in a circle, and fortunately were not very far from Laurence's den.

Fortunately, we say, for as they came in sight Laurence staggered and nearly fell from the saddle, and had only strength left to reach the door and fall full length upon the bed of grass.

Very pale, but very determined and resolute, Cecil tied the horses up, and, kneeling down beside the swooning man, poured some brandy upon his lips.

The spirit revived him sufficiently to enable him to raise his head and look round.

He nodded with great satisfaction as he recognized the hut, and, lifting his eyes to Cecil's pale face with a quiet smile, said:

"Well, Cecil, it's my turn to faint. My poor boy, it's a rare fright for you."

"Oh, never mind me," cried Cecil, hotly, stamping his foot. "Think of yourself. Tell me where to find some water."

"At the back of the hut—the stream runs behind the rock," said Laurence.

Cecil sprang out, and returned almost immediately with one of the iron basins full.

Then, without a word, he helped Laurence to

raise himself, and bound some strips of linen round his breast.

It was some minutes before the blood would be stanchied, but Cecil succeeded in stopping it at last, and then, Laurence letting him have his way, without a word he bathed the scratch on the forehead and removed the hideous stains from the tanned face.

"There," he said, with a cheery voice, but an angelic smile of pity and tenderness; "there, you look my brave, good Laury once more! Oh, I can't bear blood, and to think you should be covered with it—ugh! And now a drop more brandy."

Laurence drank a little and dropped back. He was too weak, too faint with the loss of blood, to feel even surprised at the sudden change in his youthful companion, but he was conscious of a strange, sweet, delicious sense of peace and relief, and lay with closed eyes, half fainting, half sleeping.

Meanwhile Cecil lit the fire and put the iron stew-kettle on the tripod. Then he took one of the remaining steaks from the saddle-bags and cut it up into squares ready for stewing. When the water was hot he put it in.

It was all he could do, but he did it, then sat down to wait, for Laurence had fallen asleep.

What Cecil was thinking of as he gazed at the handsome face of the helpless cattle-runner at his feet who can say?

Perhaps the look upon his face, marvellously gentle and loving, was called there by the remembrance that he had saved his life and had shed his blood for him.

Presently Laurence woke, with a wistful, devouring gaze full in his eyes.

He stared for a moment as one does when waking from a dream, then, raising himself upon his elbow, said, faintly:

"Cecil, it is growing late. They will expect you at the station. Take the Black—he is the quickest—and do not spare him."

"And you?" asked Cecil, with a quiet but determined smile.

"Tell them," replied Laurence, laying his head down again, "that you left me in one of the runs, and that I shall be back in a day or two. You need say nothing about our little adventure, lad. I'll stay here."

Cecil smiled, and without a word rose and left the hut.

Laurence opened his eyes and sighed.

"He might have said 'Good-night,'" he muttered.

"Poor lad, too frightened, maybe, to think of anything."

In a few minutes, however, Cecil re-entered the hut with the two saddles upon his arms.

Laurence raised himself again.

"What have you taken the saddles off for?" he asked, faintly.

"You said you would stay here, did you not? And it would have mattered little if you hadn't, considering you can't ride a yard. And I am going to stay too," said Cecil, quietly.

"No, no," remonstrated Laurence. "Take the Black and make for the station."

Cecil's brow lowered.

"Laury," he said, "I should be worse than the beast that hurt you if I did such a thing. And you know it. Don't be a cruel, wicked, unkind Laury, but let me stay!" he added, imploringly, kneeling down beside him. "Let me stay!"

Laury took the little white hand and pressed it, but the youth clapped his other on top of the wounded man's and held it for a minute, then, bursting into tears, bent his head and kissed it passionately.

"THE CORSIKIAN BROTHERS."—Mr. Clark, of Chasetown, Walsall, publishes the following letter: A curious instance of similarity between twins occurred in my experience some years ago, which exemplifies the difficulty that sometimes exists of distinguishing the points of difference between individuals. They were tall, muscular men, apparently of the same height and figure, about forty years of age, and managers of coal mines. So close was the resemblance between them that I was told when they lived in the same locality they had often changed places with each other, or the one had acted for the other in his absence, without the change of masters ever having been discerned by the men employed under them. When shown their portraits I unhesitatingly pronounced them to be photographs of the same individual, and when told they were not I was unable to indicate which represented the one I had often attended in illness, and whose wife had given birth to twins twice within twelve months. I saw the other brother but once, on which occasion I conversed with him for several minutes, but only became aware that I had done so when informed of the fact weeks after.



[PUF'S DEN.]

MARRIED IN MASK.

CHAPTER III.

Valour is the chiefest virtue,
And most dignifies the haver. *Coriolanus.*

In one of the lowest streets in a most disreputable quarter of the great metropolis was situated a miserable and dilapidated house where dwelt a gang of thieves, men, women, and boys, who concealed their nefarious business under the guise of keeping a public-house and driving a market waggon. They sold liquors and tobacco to their confederates by day, and at night sallied out on expeditions connected with robbery and violence. The leader of the gang was a woman. She had gained the position of chief by her boldness and by the skill with which she ferreted out plunder and arranged plans for securing it. She was the landlady of the public-house. She hid away in her rooms her fellow thieves and their plunder. She cooked for them and left a boy-thief to attend upon her outside customers during the day, while she made a pretence of driving a market cart. This vehicle was more frequently engaged in contraband than in legitimate trade. It was more frequently laden with stolen goods than with honest vegetables. She sold a few articles of food in the streets. She stole more. Late at night her cart had been known to carry to a place of safety carpets stolen from unoccupied dwellings, silver plate and bedding which had been too long neglected by the owner, who might have left home under the impression that his housekeeper had no propensity to night walks with her lover.

This gang had enjoyed a long and valuable immunity from suspicion and arrest, in consequence of their adroit and apparent pursuit of some legitimate calling.

One of the men pretended to follow the business of a locksmith, and thus gained important knowledge as to the location of rooms and closets in the mansions of the wealthy. Another gained information of the whereabouts of family silver by a judicious peddling of a certain powder for polishing silver, while a third was often employed as a nurse to sit up with patients all night, and attend to their wants. Thus they became familiar with the interior of many dwellings and the habits of the inmates.

They had made several successful entries into houses at night, and escaped with their booty without detection. But they were not destined to escape observation and suspicion longer. A successful burglary, which had given them a large sum of money and a valuable package of bonds, was too heavy a loss to the owner to permit him to fold his hands

and await the slow and uncertain action of the police authorities. Disgusted with their incompetency and dilatory movements, he took the advice of a friend, and employed a private detective to ferret out the criminals. The person thus employed had chanced to see, before the burglary occurred, two men prowling near and watching the dwelling. Being at leisure himself, he followed this suspicious-looking couple, thinking that if they were really what he suspected, it might be well to know their haunts for future use in his profession. He followed them until they entered the abode of "Red-Eyed Mag," for by this appellation was the woman known in the neighbourhood.

For many weeks had the detective passed and repassed this den, taking notes of the trifles in and about the place which were suspicious, and which escape the attention of ordinary observers. He was still following up this trail for his own amusement, and for future possible use, when the gentleman who had lost the bonds was induced to apply to him for assistance. He immediately assumed the task of tracing the lost property, and redoubled his attentions to the house of Red-Eyed Mag, and watched the movements of all who entered there.

One night, when a terrific storm of wind and rain was holding high revel over the metropolis, and the hour was so late that few pedestrians cared to be abroad, a strange scene was being enacted in the house of the thieves.

No one of the usual occupants of the place was present except Red-Eyed Mag. She was alone, with the exception of a little child who was sleeping in the room adjoining her bar-parlour. The woman was heated with the potations in which she had indulged from her own bar, and sat, gloomy and sullen, before her smouldering fire.

Presently a shutter was blown back in the rush of the gale, and struck the house with a violent bang. The noise awakened the child. She sat up in bed, seemed bewildered for a moment, and then commenced a piteous cry.

"Shut up, you sniveller!" was the angry ejaculation of the woman.

This voice and tone only made the frightened little one more violent in her screams.

"What do you want?" thundered the woman again.

A piteous response came from the child which would have melted many a mother's heart:

"I want to see my mamma!"

"You hain't got any mamma," was the brutal answer of the woman who sat before the fire. "Be quiet, and go to sleep, or I'll wollop ye!"

The little girl cried louder and more frantically than before. Red-Eyed Mag, in a rage, seized a horsewhip and entered the little, slovenly-looking bed-chamber. She held the whip threateningly above the child and said:

"Hush now, or I'll whip you within an inch of your life!"

Two little white hands were held up pleadingly above a child so small and delicate that only a demon could strike her with a horsewhip. The little creature murmured piteously again:

"I want to see my mamma."

Down came the cruel whip with such violence upon the little head that the child fell back upon the bed and screamed with pain and fright. This seemed to exasperate the woman to frenzy, for she struck now over the face and shoulders of the helpless innocent a dozen blows.

The child now screamed with redoubled fright and pain, trying to shield her head with her little hands. Mercilessly showered the blows upon the naked shoulders and head of the little one. The poor child now screamed and then gasped in half-suffocation, so blinded and bewildered and agonized was she by the frequency of the blows. Her hands, with which she tried to avert the whip, were reddened and bleeding. But she did not know how to appease the woman, so little and so frightened was she.

Her screams of agony continued, and doubtless Red-Eyed Mag would have whipped her to death in her determined purpose to hush her cries had not the noise of the opening door, which the wind hurled inward with a bang, diverted her attention.

In another instant she was confronted by a pair of gleaming eyes, which seemed full of the most frantic rage.

The intruder upon this scene of brutal violence took in the whole tragedy at a glance, and with a spring like a tiger was upon the woman's back and shoulders, forcing her to the floor. The assailant was the black-eyed boy who tended her bar, and had just come in dripping with rain.

As the two fell to the floor there ensued a struggle to gain control of the horsewhip. The chances were all in favour of the woman. She was almost masculine in her muscular strength, and finally, as they rolled over upon the floor, the brave boy was under.

The woman clutched at his throat, her heavy weight bearing upon his chest. The boy caught her hand in his teeth and bit to the bone. She uttered an imprecation, and tore her fingers from his teeth and made another effort to throttle him. Again

the quick, tiger-like spring of the boy's head enabled him to catch her finger in his mouth.

This time he would not relinquish the tight clench of his teeth, for he knew that his life depended upon that hold. He concentrated all his falling strength into that bite, and the woman howled in agony. One of the boy's hands clutched her whip arm at the wrist and would not relinquish the hold. The other caught the wrist of the hand which she was striving to draw away from his teeth.

They both writhed in efforts to gain an advantage. Once more she tore away her finger from his teeth, and with a rapid movement caught the boy's throat. All seemed to be over now for the poor lad. His grip upon her whip arm relaxed and the hand fell out flat upon the floor. He was strangling in her clutch. But as his right hand touched the floor it convulsively caught something which had fallen from a table as they struggled against it. It was a fork with two prongs.

Strength enough remained with him to raise his arm and strike the woman in the neck. Blood followed the stab. Red-Eyed Mag released her hold upon his throat and tore herself away from the prostrate boy.

The red tide streamed down her neck, and she hastened to her mirror in alarm. In another minute she was a ghastly spectacle, pale and blood-covered. As she contemplated herself in the glass and endeavoured to stop the bleeding with a towel faintness came over her. She staggered to a chair and fell into it.

"You have killed me," she muttered. Then she began to cry.

She arose with desperate energy, struggled to reach the door, then fell headlong and lay helpless and insensible upon the floor.

The boy had arisen from his prostrate condition, and sat now upon the floor watching her. His hand still grasped the fork which had saved his life.

The little girl sat upright on her bed, and, awed into silence, watched the tragic scene. In her almost infantile consciousness she knew that the boy was her friend.

"Come here, Sam," she said, at length, awed by the fearful stillness which had succeeded the death struggle.

The boy arose to his feet and went to the bedside. He sat upon the bed and watched the prostrate woman on the floor. He still clutched the fork. He was afraid of the powerful woman upon whose neck the red stream was slowly flowing.

"I love you, Sam," said the little child, standing up in her little flannel night-gown, and twining her arms around the boy's neck.

That touch seemed to recall him to the urgencies of action. The men of the gang might soon return and murder him. Perhaps he had slain their chief. He must decide promptly upon his line of action.

"Will you go with Sam and make no noise, baby?" he said to the child.

"Where, Sam?" was the response, as she clung closer to him.

"Out in the rain," he said. "When Red-Eyed Mag wakes up she'll beat you again."

The child said "Yes," so eagerly and terrifiedly that the boy was delighted.

"I'll carry you, baby, in my two arms."

His purpose being formed he lost no time in putting it into action. He made the child sit down on the bedside until he had wrapped a blanket around her, and tied it about her waist with a string. Then he went to a drawer behind the bar in the adjoining room, and took out a revolver which was loaded. He thrust this into the bosom of his ragged jacket. Then, proceeding to a bureau, he opened all the drawers, groping for something which seemed to elude his search. At length he found what he was after. It was a slender gold chain, with a little harp attached to it. This he thrust into the pocket of his jacket.

"Come now, baby," he said, tenderly, to the child, who had remained silent upon the bed, watching him as he passed to and fro. "We're goin' now. Will you keep still as a little mouse, so Red-Eyed Mag won't know where we're goin' to?"

"Yes," was the response, given in a whisper.

The boy took the child in his arms and passed out of the cabin, leaving the woman insensible upon the floor. He left the door wide open, with the wind and rain beating in, so that before he had climbed with his burden up to the level of the street the solitary candle was extinguished, and the owner of the shanty lay alone and bleeding in total darkness.

"It's wet, Sam," whispered the muffled child as they reached the level of the street, and some of the raindrops found their way to her cheek.

"That's nothin'," was the response, as the boy took a firmer hold of his burden and walked on. "You keep still, or she'll catch us."

The child said, softly, "Yes, I will," and then nestled her little head against her protector and shut her eyes under the blanket which he had drawn over her face.

On, on, on they passed in the pitiless rain, and at times the boy paused, so violent was the rush of the gale. He was soon drenched to the skin, but his baby girl was entirely protected and soon fell asleep.

Hardly had Sam gone the length of half a dozen streets on his dreary march when two women, one of them bearing a lantern, paused in the street just above Red-Eyed Mag's shanty. The light was extinguished, and they held a consultation.

Four men who were following them in the darkness soon joined them, and a whispered discussion ensued between the six. It was evident that the party anticipated a collision when they should have descended the path which led down to the thieves' den, for they questioned each other as to the condition of their pistols. Finally the woman who bore the lantern said:

"I will reconnoitre and then bring you word. It seems they have turned in earlier than usual."

This proposition being acquiesced in, the lantern-bearer slowly and cautiously descended and paused under one of the windows. All was silence and darkness within. The only sounds without were the howl of the gale and the heavy fall of the rain.

The fearless lantern-bearer made the circuit of the house until the door was reached. Strangely enough it was open, and the rain was beating in, not even a clock was ticking in the darkness. There was no heavy breathing to indicate that any one slept in the silent dwelling.

The lantern was re-lighted, and its glare turned in through the door. There lay the proprietress of the place at full length upon the floor. The lantern was waved through the door three times to the armed party upon the street. It was the signal to advance, and the women and the four men descended and entered the room.

They found Red-Eyed Mag cold and dead. With the purpose of murder on her soul she had gone to her account. Death had baffled the detective who stood over the body in amazement with his woman's disguise, and holding out the lantern.

"Mrs. Truelove," he said, addressing the real woman, "I have lost the scent. Bessie was here, for I saw her through that window to-night."

"Then, Pryor," said Mr. Truelove, as he put forth his arm to support his agonized wife, "our only hope rests in your finding the boy."

CHAPTER IV.

Small habits well pursued betimes
May reach the dignity of crimes. *H. More.*

SAM held bravely on his way with his burden. He was hardy and indomitable, and exposure to the rain was no novelty to him. From earliest childhood he had been familiar with hardships, poverty, cold, and hunger. He had even while an infant been buffeted by the world. He never could ascertain who his parents were. The earliest recollection he had of his own life was when he was seated upon the floor of a miserable house, attended by an old woman, who flung to him fragments of bread and meat which men occasionally brought to the woman.

One day when he had grown to be a boy of some six or seven years, and had joined a gang of little thieves who plundered the markets and groceries near the house, a change occurred in his life. While bravely battling with two large boys who were maltreating a little fellow from whom they had forced an apple he was rescued by a man who thrashed the boys and commended him for his daring and obstinacy. This man induced him to run away from the old woman and become one of a gang of burglars who needed a little fellow of courage to enter the houses before them and unlock the doors from the inside. They would cut out with a diamond large panes of glass in the windows and lift him in through the aperture.

He proved to be as noiseless as a cat and cool as a veteran thief at this service. He was so efficient in making these preliminary entrances that the gang found him an indispensable auxiliary in their robberies and rewarded him with shelter and food. He grew up in this company until he was thirteen years of age, and already began to entertain purposes of becoming a first-class burglar himself, so that he could enjoy an equal share of the booty.

But most of this gang were detected in a burglary and were sent to prison for a term of years. He escaped by being outside of the mansion at the time it was robbed. When the police entered the dwelling and arrested the robbers he ran unnoticed away. He soon found employment again with the thieves who frequented the house of Red-Eyed Mag, and

was promoted to the position of barkeeper by that woman.

He would in time have received farther promotion in his profession had he not been such a persistent foe to cruelty and cowardice. He repeatedly crossed the owner of the thieves' house in her barbarities to children who fell in her way, and thus incurred her enmity.

The tragedy recorded in the last chapter was the climax of the hostility between them, and in the effort to take the boy's life she lost her own.

Sam was once more without a home, and with a certain awe standing him as to what might be the consequences for him should the woman die. He hoped she was only faint from loss of blood. But dead or alive he knew the hostility of the gang was secured now, and that he had better take to cover as soon as possible.

In addition to the burden of his apprehensions he had another weight bearing upon his mind, and upon his arms too, the helpless child. What should he do with her? He did not know who she was. He only was aware that she had been stolen, robbed of her clothes and the chain and harp, and deprived of her ears, which had been cut off close to her head. She was barefooted, and her rudeness only half covered by the dingy yellow flannel nightgown which had been her only garment by day and by night. What should he do with her?

The little creature, in the few days she had been an inmate of the thieves' resort, had learned to love him. She clung to the boy because he was kind to her and defended her from the cruel woman. She had learned to run behind him for safety when Red-Eyed Mag raised a broom or whip above her. Sam fought like a tiger for her, and received upon his head and shoulders the blows intended for her. Her unhappy baby-heart clung to him. He was her Heaven. Sam typified to her little soul the essence of hope, beauty, joy. Red-Eyed Mag was to her infant apprehension all that adults conceive of evil-doers. Tears had gathered in her eyes when the memory of her gentle mother and Mary and her father had come again and again to her. She would piteously cry out at such recollections, but the terrible chastisement which was sure to follow such outbursts had taught her caution. She saw that blows were the penalty of memory, and that poor Sam had to share her punishment. So her baby-heart twined its tendrils about the boy, and when the woman was absent from the house she and Sam had peace and fellowship. The boy had awakened love. But now responsibility for the little girl's nourishment and shelter had devolved upon him, and toiling on through the storm he was speculating upon his embarrassing position.

He required for his own safety concealment; for the child's safety a roof, food, and clothing. He knew that if he could shelter and feed the little girl for a brief period, his own courage and efforts would soon provide a living for him and her. Was he not almost a man? And did not men divide evenly the booty which came from "cracking a crib"? Was not he thoroughly conversant now with the details of the burglar's profession? Why could he not be the chief in a bold exploit? It was high time he left the foot of the ladder of fame and mounted to the altitude where sat and drank and smoked the principals. He would be chief now. He was determined upon it. He felt something stirring within him which urged him to ambition and to command. He had been educated a thief. He resolved to excel in his profession. The words conscience, morality, honesty, had never entered his ear. He knew that human society was divided into two great classes, the men who had property and held tight to it, and the men who had nothing and were bent upon depleting the pockets of the property men. Fate had cast him with the empty-handed, and he was determined to be the highest in his class. Those from whom he had derived his education had indicated to him that he possessed talents for the life struggle. They had convinced him of his natural gifts. Now was the favourable moment to turn them to account. Destiny had severed the link which bound him to Red-Eyed Mag and her band. Now was the time to give full play to the great thoughts and impulses which stirred within him.

Those reflections were haunting the boy as he made his way slowly in the storm, carrying the sleeping child. He was weary, hungry, wet, and cold. But he had powers of endurance, which chroniclers extol in historical characters as if they were virtues. He could be drenched with rain and never murmur. He could walk miles upon miles without food and utter no complaint. His arms were very weary now from carrying the sleeping child, but he would not abandon her. Such an idea never could enter his head. She loved and trusted him, and she was helpless. That was enough for Sam, the boy-thief. Protector of the helpless. Sam was

that all over. But he did not know why. That was something born in him. It was like the daring in him, innate. When he stole a loaf of bread he did no violence to nature. But had he dropped the little child to perish in the storm he would have hated himself for ever.

So on, on, on he trudged until he was so weary that he dropped down on the pavement in front of a shop in the street he was crossing. There he was sheltered from the rain, and sat on the cold pavement, holding the sleeping girl.

He drew aside the blanket from her face for a moment, and by the light of the street-lamp saw that she was peaceful in her slumber.

Then an expression of pain crossed his countenance as he saw the red marks across the little face made by the whip of Red-Eyed Mag. She had been cruelly beaten in his absence, and he had just returned in time to save her life.

When he was sufficiently rested he arose with his burden, dealing as gently with it as an affectionate mother, and resumed his march.

He knew that he had not many streets to traverse now to reach his destination. But there was no cessation in the heavy fall of the rain, and as he passed from under the roof, and turned down a street leading to the Thames, he was again assailed by its merciless peltings.

Nearer and nearer came the broad stream which floats the commerce of many nations. He was passing along a dirty street, crowded with low houses. So late was the hour that all the lodging-houses were closed on either side of his advance.

At length he saw before him an empty space or wharf bordering the river. The dim outline of sloops and schooners, with their masts and cordage, were stretched along the dock, and amid them only a solitary lamp glimmered in the rigging.

Within thirty feet of the water he turned into a vacant space, from which a vapour was slowly rising in the rain. This spot had never been built upon, and adjoined a slaughter-house, foul with stench, which polluted the whole atmosphere around.

On one side was the slaughter house, on another side a four-storey brick brewery, on the third side a street of dirty houses, and on the fourth side the dock and river.

Sam bore his precious burden along the foul terraces until he reached a cavern made by a party of juvenile thieves, who had here concealed themselves from the police, and hidden their booty.

No one would have suspected that human beings were capable of selecting such a place for a habitation. Hence the impunity enjoyed by the youthful band. Their cave opened out upon the river and they escaped observation. The storm was so violent that the youthful band had retreated early to their den and were all asleep. One of them, a boy of some dozen years of age, was stretched across the den just inside of where some filthy straw hung over the entrance and dripped a constant stream from the rain. He was on duty as a sentinal, to warn them of approaching feet. But feeling secure from intrusion in consequence of the violence of the storm, he had dozed and nodded away upon his post until sleep assumed absolute sovereignty over him, and he had fallen back at full length into perfect oblivion. Presently a hand touched him upon the face and he started up, looked bewildered, and then exclaimed:

"Who's that?"

He saw that the entrance was darkened by something that obstructed the light which had been shining in from the ship lantern some thirty feet distant on the river.

"Hush!" was the reply. "It's Sam. I want to sleep here."

"Hullo!" was the response of the guard, now relieved of his apprehension. "What's the matter at Red-Eyed Mag's?"

He sat up and stared at the intruder, who seated himself upon a blanket which had been spread out by the thieves upon the bottom of the den, after he had carefully laid the muffled girl upon it.

"There's trouble up at the crib," he said. "It's too hot for me there. Don't wake the boys. I'm in trouble, and I want to hide here. Mum's the word."

"All right," said Pup. "Who licked Stranahan when he stoned Pup? Who gave Pup a jacket in the snow storm? I'll go halves with yer, Sam. I'm master here, I am."

"You remember things, Pup?"

"Of course I does," said the thief with the monosyllabic title. "Do you want some grub, Sam?"

"Good! Yes," said the hungry night traveller, eagerly. "You hain't got any left, have you?"

"Lots," was the reply, as the boy-sentinel arose to his feet, and went groping through the darkness in the back of the cavern, where several boys were stretched out and sleeping soundly.

Sam sat near the entrance in his dripping garments, secure from the storm at last, and with a

sensation of comfort and satisfaction creeping over him. The baby-girl was sheltered, and food for his hungry stomach was at hand. His calculation that gratitude might still be a power in life had been realized. Pup had not forgotten the brave lad who interposed when the bully Stranahan was scarring his little face with stones. He had offered Sam the beggar's extreme of gratitude, "halves" in everything.

The apprentice burglar knew full well the significance of that offer.

Presently Pup emerged from the utter darkness of the rear, and came to the front with his arms full of bread, boxes of sardines plundered from neighbouring groceries, and canned fruits which had been originally designed for more delicate palates than those of beggar boys.

This juvenile band of thieves were in "the full tide of successful experiment," and the larders of the cavern were in admirable condition at the time of Sam's advent. His hungry jaws were soon at work, and conversation became a minor consideration. Pup had with considerable hospitality brought out also a "sardine-opener," and there was consequently no serious obstruction to the elegance and ease of the midnight banquet. The soft, brilliant play of gaslight upon the feast of course had to be dispensed with. But the distant ship lantern glimmering hazily through the rain was adequate to all Sam's requirements in the way of light.

When the guest of the cavern had satisfied his hunger he suggested the propriety of producing some liquid to wash down the eatables. Pup was fortunately prepared for any reasonable demand upon him as host, and after another dive into the mysterious inner darkness he reappeared in the dim light bearing a bottle and a tin cup. It proved to be a bottle of port, and Sam manifested his appreciation of the beverage and his gratitude by an expressive though not classical exclamation.

"We've got lots more," was the cheering announcement which followed the guest's demonstration of satisfaction.

"Why, you're livin' like fightin' cocks, Pup."

"We are that. That stuff in them bottles is just as easy to git as dirt. Ye see there's a shutter off the back end of old Miller's shop, and all a fellow has to do is just to climb on to a shed, and shove up the window, and that's all."

"But he'll miss it, and then ye're nabbed when ye're climbin' in some night, and away ye'll go to quod."

"Not me," said Pup, confidently. "The old fellow keeps two porters what steals and drinks all day, just as soon as he leaves 'em. I heard him blow thunder out of 'em one day for aunkin' at his baer. Ye see the ketch is broke on his back window, and they never thinks of puttin' up a ladder and looking at it, for it looks like nobody could git out that way if they should git in. It's more'n twenty feet above the floor. Ye see I climb out of the shed roof till I gits to the window, shoves it up, and then lets down a long string with a slip-nose that catches on to the necks of the bottles. They stand thick all over the floor."

"Oh, you're all right," said Sam, approvingly, when the *modus operandi* was explained to him.

After a minute's silence, when both of the boys had stretched themselves out upon the stolen blankets which covered the entire floor of the cave, and Sam had put his arm protectively around the baby-girl preparatory to a sleep, a voice murmured low in the gloom. It was Sam's cautious tone.

"Pup, I've got a plan into my head."

"What's that?" said the host.

"I'm goin' to git up a new gang."

"What for?" said Pup.

"To crack cribs," was the bold avowal.

"That's your sort," exclaimed his companion, raising his head and postponing the contemplated nap.

Both boys sat up again upon the blankets, one to explain his programme, the other eager to know what an apprentice burglar, with the skill and daring that Sam was reputed to have, could mean by admitting him into his counsels.

"How many men is there into it?" said Pup.

"Nary a man," was the startling response. "I jest want myself and four boys."

"Jingo!" exclaimed the youthful host. "I like that; but they say it takes about men to git up that high in the world."

"That's all bosh," was the contemptuous rejoinder. "Jest feel that thing, Pup. That's what makes boys men."

He held out something in the gloom of the night which touched his companion's knee with a hard, resistant feeling. Pup grasped it, and ran his fingers over the cold iron.

"A pistol, by jingo!" he said, delighted as boys generally are when for the first time they are allowed the immense dignity of holding fire-arms in their own hands.

"Be careful," whispered Sam. "It's loaded, and there's five shots into it. It's a revolver."

The younger and less experienced boy at this admonition turned the muzzle towards the opening of the cavern, and contented himself with holding on firmly to the handle.

"Now what do you say, Pup?" continued the future chief, "to trying your fortunes in my company? I'll put money into your pockets sure."

"And stick by a fellow through thick and thin?" inquired Pup, with blended sensations of delight and apprehension. He had heard of prisons, and knew that a residence in them at the expense of the state was not exactly the acme of human happiness.

"Can you doubt me, Pup?"

The words of the young chief were low, but as full of sublimity as any assurance ever given to a great commander of armies by his trusted and faithful leader of the flank attack on the eve of a great battle. It was only a boy's voice in the darkness, but it went through every vein of Pup's body in a thrill of fire.

"No, Sam," said he, quickly. "You stood by me when bigger fellars run, and you punched Stranahan's nose. You're the fellow to trust. I trust ye, by jingo!"

(To be continued.)

A WORKING KANGAROO.—Man has not yet exhausted his ingenuity in making animals work for him, and the Australian papers speak of a colonist who has put a kangaroo to work. A machine is put in motion by the animal. It works at about half-power, and turns a grinding-stone, chaff-cutter, bean mill, turnip-cutter, and a washing-machine, and all at the same time. The contrivance also lifts water separately for irrigating the garden.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.—A recent writer on horticulture describes the struggle for life among plants. He says each plant endeavours, almost unconsciously, to destroy his neighbour, to occupy his ground, to feed upon his nutriment, to devour his substance. There are armies and invasions of grasses, barbarian inroads and extirpations. Every inch of ground is contested by the weeds; the forest is a struggle for precedence; the wars of the roses are a perennial feud. The severest landscape, the stillest woodland, are the mortal arena of vegetable and animal conflict. It is a curious fact that the English plants sent to Australia always kill out the native plants of the same character.

A MAN WITH A SEAL'S FACE.—A St. Petersburg correspondent, describing the curiosities in the shows at the fair there recently, says:—One of these which I went in to inspect was really a scientific curiosity. It was a hairy-faced man and child. In the picture outside he was represented as a species of Orson with a great club, and a slain beast lying at his feet. His hair commenced at the eyebrows, there being no forehead whatever. It was very long, thick, and silky, of a brown colour. The eyelids themselves were covered with a short soft hair, and below the eyes hair extended all over his face, including the nose, where, however, it was a little less thick than upon the cheeks, so that the colour of the skin could be seen through it. Singularly enough, the parting of the moustache was clear and well defined, this being the only spot upon the face free from hair. The face singularly resembled that of a seal. He had no hair upon his hands, nor, as far as we were informed, had he any unusual amount of hair upon his body. He had until a few months since worked as an ordinary peasant. His child, a boy about three years old, inherits his father's peculiarity, its face being entirely covered with some soft light fluff which in time promises to rival the hirsute display of his father. There was no possible deception in the matter, for the man came down amongst us for close inspection, and his wife brought down the child

THE MYSTERY OF FALKLAND TOWERS.

CHAPTER XXI.

My life has crept so long on a broken wing
Through cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear
That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing.

Tennyson.

The fortnight of weary illness and burning pain, to which Lady Florence was subjected, at least saved her the mental anguish of reading the newspaper accounts, coupled frequently and with cowardly unaction with her own name, of the sensational arrest of Redesdale at the grand party at Falkland House.

Side by side with a retrospect of a hardened villain's crimes, her own character and mode of life were gloatingly dwelt upon in the most unprovoked and unjustifiable manner, and her name for the nonce was the talk of the town. True, she escaped the brunt of this horror, but it was not intended by those

in whose toils she was immeshed that she should escape it all.

Little by little, as she grew stronger, were there seemingly imprudent tongues in readiness to hint what had been written and said, until, when once more downstairs in a state of rapid convalescence, she began to think herself a sort of social Pariah whom all respectable people must avoid, and she resolved to go into public no more.

It was a short-lived resolution—one, indeed, which she was in a measure forced to abrogate, for there was no other alternative.

She was sitting in a little parlour, or sitting-room, adjoining her bed-chamber. The countess, Lady Fitz-Grammont, and others had called that morning to congratulate her upon her convalescence. Little Annette, who had been really devoted to her during her great illness, had placed some fresh camellias and tuberose on the little table, and their fragrance filled the entire room.

Madame La Grande entered, and said, somewhat timidly:

"I come as an ambassador this morning, my dear lady."

"Indeed! From whom?"

"From your cousin, Lord Falkland. He wishes you to permit him to come in and congratulate you on your recovery."

During her long sickness he had been extremely attentive, Florence had been told. Many times during each day he had sent up to the nurses, inquiring of her state, and, according to the countess and others, he had even haunted the door of her chamber until they were ashamed of him, and told him as much. "Tell him he may come," said Lady Florence.

In a few moments his lordship entered, and was profuse in his congratulations.

"My dear cousin," said he, at length, after he had artfully led her mind to the subject nearest to his desires, "it must be painful to all of us to recur to events which have been the cause of our greatest anguish, but sometimes it becomes necessary. I suppose you must, more or less, hold me responsible for the outrageous scene which broke up our party and threw you upon a bed of fever."

She sighed, and passed her hand wanderingly over her brow.

"Whenever I think of it," she murmured, "my brain reels again, and the old, dull pain comes back to my heart. But it seems to me, my lord, that you were indeed greatly in fault in having that—that man as a guest in your house."

"I knew nothing of his character," exclaimed his lordship, very earnestly. "He was introduced to me by gentlemen—by men of rank, into whose confidence he had crept by some hocus-pocus. They suffer with me, I may say with you and me"—Lady Florence groaned—"in his exposure. Great Heaven! I am as crushed as you can be, my poor, poor child! though you are a woman, and I have a man's strength to grin and bear it. By Heaven! I feel like a whipped hound—ashamed to appear at the club, or anywhere else in public!"

He was an excellent actor. He sprang to his feet, and paced the floor, as if in the wildest perturbation of mind.

"Oh!" moaned the unhappy lady, "if it affects you so strongly, how must it crush me?"

"Forgive me for my violence!" he exclaimed, resuming his seat by her side. "I will endeavour to be calm. I have been meditating over the unhappy business during the last day or two. There is only one thing to do, cousin; and that is, live it down!"

She smiled feebly, and shook her head.

"Oh, if it is a difficult task for one!" he exclaimed, seizing her hand, and resisting her weak effort to withdraw it, "need we fear to make the attempt with our united strength? Florence, dear Florence, listen to me!" he ran on, as though carried away by an overpowering passion; "I love you madly, devotedly—have loved you, almost against hope, for many weary, aching months! Circumstances have cast us together in misery, as in affluence. Fate seems to demand our union. Say, say that you will be mine—that you will accept the devotion of my life!"

Her mind grew confused. The events of the past, the many instances she had known of his meanness, violence and treachery fled again, in swift succession, before her, as the events of a life's span through the brain of the drowning man. And yet now, in her friendliness and bitter desolation, the passion and apparent sincerity of his wild, beseeching voice were a relief to the aching silence of her heart. But she, nevertheless, quickly withdrew her hand.

"My lord, I cannot marry you," she said, "because I do not love you."

"You love another!" he cried, fiercely; "you love Ralph Romney!"

"You do not know that!" she replied, flushing to

the roots of her hair. "You must not speak to me in this way! I am weak—very weak and feeble! pray leave me!"

But he saw his advantage, his golden opportunity, he thought, and was not the man to let it slip.

"You do love him, or have done so," he cried; "but you will only loathe him when you know all. Has he not forgotten, nay, scorned, you utterly in the mad and vicious infatuation from which I—even I, in the blindness of my generosity—sought in vain to save him? Even now he has nearly wasted his patrimony and hopelessly mortgaged his estates, and has become the constant companion of the lowest and vilest of man and womankind. Oh, Florence, Florence, cast this unworthy image from your mind, and accept the love, the devotion of one who will serve and protect you to the death."

He was on his knees before her, but he had unwittingly defeated his own end, even when he thought the prize in his clutch. Feeble as all her faculties had grown from her severe fever, she was beginning to yield, when he touched the cords of a memory that had lain dormant, and she spurned him from her with a strength and energy at which she was afterward surprised herself.

"Away, hypocrite, doubly accursed hypocrite!" she cried, with withering scorn. "Mine was the voice which you heard in the passageway of Falkland Towers, when you and that villain Captain Diggs were discussing your plot of treachery against poor Ralph. I heard it all. Away! your breath poisons the atmosphere of this room, which before you came was sweet and sacred with the fragrance of flowers!"

He sprang to his feet, thunderstruck at her announcement of the information she had obtained, and his cheek flushing with momentary shame, but, brazen, reckless as he was, he recovered himself in an instant.

"Do you reflect, mad girl, the blow your reputation and mine have sustained?" he said.

"I care nothing for yours, sir. I doubt that you ever had any to lose. All your friends whom I have encountered have been rascals and criminals, or at best suspicious. If my reputation has suffered, it has been through your falsehoods, and the falsehoods of your hirelings. I shall yet prove that my character is spotless and pure, as becomes the character of a British noblewoman. Ay; alone will I live it down, my lord!"

She sank back, quivering from head to foot, entirely exhausted by the effort to which she had nerved herself; and his lordship sprang out of the room, banging the door behind him.

"Who would have dreamed that she knew of my complicity with Diggs?" he growled, as he paced the floor like a caged lion, after relating the result of his suit to Madame La Grande. "Oh, Heaven! The cards are against me! I had the game already in my hands, but for that."

"Well, you have done the best you could. Why not end the matter at once?" said the woman, coolly.

"How?"

"How, stupid? Why, call in the aid of the captain's friend, the Indian poison-doctor, to be sure."

"No, no! The risk is too great. We have not yet come to the last resort. If you could only get her under your thumb once more—you and the countess—get her out into the world again, regardless of appearances, we might yet compromise her so materially that she would have no other resource but to yield to my proposals."

"Oh, if you wish to try it again, be sure that we will have no difficulty in managing her."

"I doubt it. The fact of her having found out Diggs and me proves that she is deeper and wider awake than we ever gave her credit for. You will henceforth find her tougher material to handle, depend upon it. But we must do the best we can."

They did find her tougher material, but Madame La Grande, the Countess of Arundel and Lady Fitz-Grammont were skillful manipulators, and made it a point to study the whims and vagaries and weaknesses of their victims as the anxious mariner studies the signs of weather and his quadrant and compass.

Lady Florence at first showed a considerable spirit of resistance, but they gave her a weakener at the outset by making light of the shame and opprobrium which she imagined had been brought upon her, and brought a number of other friends to laugh her out of the idea. They even brought a scrap, purporting to have been clipped out of a newspaper—but in reality set up and printed in a neighbouring job-printing office—in which the most heartfelt regrets were expressed at the continued illness of the lovely and accomplished Lady Florence Falkland, of Falkland Towers, "one of our oldest and proudest baronies," in which the arrest of Redesdale was delicately al-

luded to as "the unfortunate *contretemps*, which had not only occasioned much mortification to the noble Falklands, but, indirectly, to a number of our titled gentry, whose credulity had been taught a lesson which would not soon be very forgotten, and in which it was fondly hoped that a speedy restoration to complete health would soon cause our operas and public assemblies to be once more irradiated by that star of noble beauty which circumstances had of late so painfully eclipsed."

"But why, then, did they speak so cruelly of me a short time ago?" asked Lady Florence, simply.

"Don't you know that money can do anything, my dear?" said the countess, laughing. "We told you at the time that that odious paragraph was the work of some envious person, who paid highly for having it placed in the journal, while this which we have just read to you bears the stamp of editorial truth and candour on the face of it."

Having thus annihilated Lady Florence's principal incentive to resist their importunities—namely, dread of public opinion—the remainder of the conspirators' task was comparatively easy. Florence was in just that weak, vacillating, unnerved condition which always succeeds a violent sickness, and which left her but a plaything in their hands. Besides, Madame La Grande seemed to know nothing of the rebuff received by his lordship; the latter himself was still respectful and polite as usual, though perhaps a trifle more distant, and thus the young lady was relieved of another source of annoyance, for she had feared that Falkland would revenge himself by being as cross and disagreeable as possible.

And then the ladies were so kind, so considerate! They took their airing in their carriages, and they smiled among themselves, with secret satisfaction, as they perceived that, with the return of her health, strength, and spirits, came back also her desire to resume the whirl of opera, party, ball, and other brilliant dissipation which had dazzled and bewildered her from the first.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Tis slander; whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue Out-venoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie All corners of the world; kings, queens, and states, Maids, matrons—nay, the secrets of the grave This viperous slander enters." *Cymbeline.*

"We have arranged a pleasant surprise for you, my dear," said the countess, early upon a certain morning that she had invited herself to take breakfast with Lady Florence in her room. "His lordship, we understand, takes dinner at his club this evening, and we've arranged to smuggle you out of the house and take you to the Princess's."

"Do you mean the Princess's Theatre?" said Lady Florence. "I have two boxes there."

"No, no, my dear!" said the countess, laughing merrily; "not the theatre, nor to any real princess's, as far as that goes, but to a place that goes by that name. But I dare not tell you any more at present. Lady Fitz-Grammont, Felicia Withers and I are going to dine with you this evening, and after that we're going to the Princess's. Don't ask any questions now, for I'll tell you nothing more about it."

The countess ran away, leaving Florence, who had now nearly recovered her health, very curious to know where and what the mysterious Princess's was.

That same day his lordship met Hugo Withers at the club, and lent that worthy young gentleman 20s.

"By-the-by, there's a little matter in which you can oblige me, Hugo," said his lordship.

"You have only to name it, my lord," said Hugo, "you must know that you have made me yours."

"I want you to be at the Princess's this evening, in the large gaming saloon at the back of the stage. You will see four ladies enter, veiled of course, but you will have no difficulty in knowing all of them though you, yourself, must be well disguised. One of the ladies, the one wearing a bronze veil, will be my little cousin, Florence. You must inveigle her in behind the scenes and then ring up the curtain. You have made fun of many a young simpleton in this way before."

"True! But your cousin—Lady Florence, my lord!" exclaimed Withers, starting back.

"Will you do it, or will you not?" said Falkland, biting his lips and looking black.

"Certainly; only I could not forbear expressing my surprise," said the scapegrace.

The establishment known to its *habitués* as the Princess's consisted of gambling-rooms and refreshment saloons, connected with a small theatre, the exhibitions of which were more humorous than select.

One price gave admission to the entire building, and the visitors spent their time at play or in watch

ing the cheap performance behind the footlights, or lounging from one room to the other.

Although the majority of the patrons of this mélange of vicious pastimes were themselves vicious, it was fashionable for some of the sprigs of nobility and other gentlemen with more curiosity than brains to visit its halls. Ladies also were not infrequently led by their curiosity to frequent the gilded halls of the "Princess." Of course, they invariably did so deeply veiled, or otherwise masked, and mostly attended by male relatives or friends, who were careless enough to gratify their curiosity; but some of the bolder, or more eccentric, were often induced to go alone, or attended by their footman, the carriages being in waiting below. Few gentlemen, however, would have deemed it prudent to be the escorts of their young and esteemed lady friends to such a spot.

The audience of the little theatre was, in consequence of the high price of admission, mostly composed of men of money—*roués*, titled gamblers, spend-thrifts, and other profligates, with at least the garb and worldly recognition of being gentlemen. This attendance was especially great upon such evenings when it had been previously given out by the "Princess" that the curtain was to be rung up on a novice.

This operation—an infamous relic of the London clubs, described so severely by Victor Hugo in his "L'Homme qui Rit," where the less influential classes were subjected to atrocious indignities for the entertainment of the gentry—may be described in a few words.

Some young woman—an orphan, if possible, or at best, with parents and friends powerless to resent the insult—was inveigled to accompany some "gentleman" to the Princess's, which she probably did under numerous misrepresentations as to the true character of the place, and perhaps a simple confidence in the honour of her scapegrace of an escort.

The chosen spirits of the place would be apprized of the coming event, and the galleries and pit of the house stocked with an anticipative audience of both sexes.

The trembling novice would soon have some misgivings, and insist upon her "friend" escorting her from the place at once. Under pretence of doing so, he would lead her behind the scenes.

The orchestra strikes up, the curtain rolls aloft, and instead of the accustomed performance is presented the rarer spectacle of a poor, trembling, frightened girl, bewildered with terror and embarrassment. The veil is torn from her face, the audience roar with derision and delight. At every fresh exhibition of terror, at every new phase of her frantic fear and mental anguish, the high-bred joy and hilarious malignity of the spectators burst forth anew.

The poor novice rushes, most likely, this way and that, to escape the gaze of the cruel insulters.

But there is but one outlet from the stage—the scenery having, with cruel forethought, been so arranged as to effectually delude and imprison her, and thus prolong the enjoyment of the lookers-on. If the novice does not faint away—as was quite often the case—she at last finds the one passage of exit, and is free—that is, she is freed from the momentary horror, which caused her more direct and violent suffering; but she is never afterwards freed from the cowardly obloquy which pursues her every where in the pitying smiles and whispers of her companions, in the knowing nudges and familiar leers that greet her in the public thoroughfares, and in the shame which her own imagination enhances fifty-fold. But, as we have said, she was generally chosen for her friendlessness, and therefore her aristocratic persecutors were safe enough from resentment.

To such an ignominious exposure did Lord Falkland, in the reckless pursuit of his villainous schemes, design the gentle and unhappy girl whom fate had thrown into his power.

Utterly unconscious of the character of the Princess's, and in her present condition of false pride and mental foolishness, Lady Florence fluttered speedily enough into the new snare spread for her by the profound and patient wicked ones by whom she was environed.

The countess, as she had promised, came in the evening, accompanied by Lady Fitz-Grammont and Felicia Withers, to dine with Lady Florence and Madame La Grande.

They were all very gay indeed, though they refused to gratify Florence's curiosity at first. Madame La Grande, however, seemed, apparently from the most prudential reasons, to counsel a delay in their present visit. She timidly hinted that the Princess's was not "the thing" it had once been with the nobility; that they ran the risk of recognition by some of the gentlemen, and, if so, would they not in some measure be compromised, and all that sort of thing?

Then the countess, aptly aided by her con-

federates, rushed to the rescue, with glowing cheek and enthusiastic tongue. She painted the refined excitements of the Princess's in a hundred hues. It was all the go. Ladies of rank were going there more than ever before. It was becoming even more the rage than fifty years ago. Besides, wasn't dear Lady Florence to go in her own carriage, under the protection of her favourite footman (one of his lordship's basest hirelings)? Weren't they—the ladies—to be constantly by her side?

The dinner was concluded, the carriages rolled up to the door, and the ladies, veiled as had been agreed, left Falkland House and arrived in front of the Princess's.

"I do not like this, countess," said Florence, as she alighted in an obscure, narrow street, before a mean-looking, dimly lighted, upstairs entrance, through which, however, many gentlemen were passing, after a slight detention before a little pigeon-hole, which apparently served as the ticket-box.

"Nonsense, my child! It's *sub rosa*, you know—*sub rosa*," whispered the countess. "I have our tickets already purchased, so that we will not be detained at the door. Come!"

Still reluctant, Lady Florence leaned timorously upon Madame La Grande as she passed up the stairs, at the same time motioning her footman—in whom she really trusted—to follow her.

The sound of music reached them, even before they attained the summit of the stairs. A brief corridor was traversed, and then they entered a large and brilliantly lighted refreshment saloon. The small tables were occupied by gentlemen and ladies, the greatest decorum prevailed, the attentive and genteel waiters moved swiftly about, and, save their slipped footfalls, scarcely a sound was heard above the low breathing of the music.

"Nothing wrong here, certainly, my dear!" whispered the countess, turning anxiously to Lady Florence. "Let us move on to the card-rooms," said Lady Fitz-Grammont.

They did so, accompanying a considerable throng who were lounging towards another entrance, whence proceeded, as they advanced, the murmur of many voices and the clinking of ivory markers.

"See!" said the countess, as they entered and paused just within the first and largest of a series of gaming saloons; "is it not charming, my dear? See the high-bred party at the roulette-table. The Duke of H— and Baron L— these you yourself must have met at some of our balls, and know most of the ladies, despite their veils. There is Lady M—, who has already run through more than half her private fortune, which she still hopes to retrieve. The small, childish-looking person next to her is the Honourable Mrs. M—, and the lofty dame, who is winning heavily, is the Russian Princess Skirovski, who has been fighting the banks at Baden Baden all the summer, and still pants for victory in London."

The countess was ably seconded by the other ladies, who, as they approached the roulette games, rattled glibly in their turn, giving to this or that player fictitious and high-sounding titles, and pretending to move at ease among the highest and worthiest of the land.

"But the ladies without any veils whatever?" murmured the suspicious Florence. "I do not like them. They appear so bold, and drink wine so incessantly, and—and they look at me so strangely."

"Mere wealthy parvenues, whom we naturally attract by our superior bearing!" replied Lady Fitz-Grammont, loftily.

"But who is that aged lady who plays so desperately? She also wears no mask, and yet her face is noble and commanding."

"That," replied the countess, for once, at least, correctly naming the person alluded to, "is the old Marchioness de V—. She is an inveterate gambler, and no longer cares for appearances. She has disease of the heart, and some gentlemen have already laid heavy wagers that she would die at the game."

"How shocking!" exclaimed Florence.

They gathered, with a large number of others, about the table where the old marchioness was playing, for the stakes were very great, and momentarily growing larger.

Florence gazed at the aged player, as if fascinated. The hard face of the dealer never moved, but the old noblewoman's face and manner were painful studies of fleeting and conflicting emotions. Now the jewels upon her breast would scintillate above her trembling frame, and her rheumy eyes would gleam with avaricious cunning as her hooked hands would drag in her temporary winnings; then she would seem to completely collapse as fortune varied, and the long rake of the marker swept away her notes and coins.

The scene would have been painfully interesting

to any one. It seemed, in the shrunken person of the poor old woman, as not so much a game of fortune as a desperate chancing between Life and Death.

"By Jove, Harry!" Lady Florence heard one gentleman whisper to another, close behind her, "the old dame is going it strong to-night. She has only one small estate left in Devonshire, and they say she will risk even her last mortgages on that—in fact, her all—this evening."

Lady Florence did not turn to see the speaker, whose words, however, only deepened her intensity in the game.

The marchioness lost, lost; and like all desperate players, the more she lost the heavier she played.

At last she appeared to reach the highest state of nervous excitement. But not a sound issued from her clenched, bloodless lips, and, thrusting her bony hand—how bony and corpse-like it seemed beneath its bedizenment of rings!—into the bosom of her elegant dress, she drew forth a number of folded parchments, intermixed with bank-notes and bills of exchange, and placed them upon a single card.

"All, all! mortgages, bills of exchange, and all!" she muttered.

"How much, marchioness?" asked the polite dealer, with a smile.

"Huxly House, in Devonshire, for seven thousand, and the bills are twenty-five hundred pounds."

"You bet heavily to-night, most gracious lady," commented the dealer, as the ivory ball whirled in the grooves. "Bad luck, too! for you've lost again. What ho, there! Where are her servants? Look to the marchioness!"

Every one was greatly excited. The marchioness's head was thrown back; the wrinkles on her aged face were pinched and puckered into little bunches, as by an unseen hand; red foam was upon her lips, and the fingers of the one hand which still clutched the green baize of the board were hooked rigidly like the talons of a bird of prey.

Three servants in half-livery hastened to her side. But Life and Death had thrown for a soul, and Death had won the cast. Now they might plunge her to the throat in gold—her bony fingers could not close upon a single coin.

Horrified beyond measure, Lady Florence, as the old woman was borne away, clutched the arm of Madame La Grande, who swiftly led the way out of the immediate throng.

As they passed through the press the same voice which had commented before said, quite as coolly and carelessly:

"Paid off at last, Harry! By Jove, I know a dozen bets that will be won by her death!"

"Oh! my friend, take me away—let us hasten from this horrible place!" exclaimed poor Lady Florence, feeling ready to faint with fear.

"Have a moment's patience, my dear lady," whispered the wily woman. "I am also greatly shocked, and quite as ill as yourself. See, there is the countess and Felicia beckoning to us. We will go into the farther room, and a little wine will soon restore us."

Lady Florence hung upon her like a dead weight, and permitted herself to be led away.

"What an adventure! Who'd have dreamed it?" exclaimed the countess, meeting them. "Poor dear, how pale you are! But come—a little refreshment before you think of returning to your carriage! There, there!"

(To be continued.)

CHARLEY GALE.

By the Author of "The Lily of Connaught."

CHAPTER VII.

Who lives and is not weary of a life Exposed to manacles deserves them well.

Cowper.

To spring forward, to seize the hand, to throw the door open, and discover Peter Crittles was the work of one instant. To catch the would-be jailer by the neck and hurl him into the room occupied the second. In the third Charley Gale had locked the door on the outside, and was gliding noiselessly down the dark stairs.

He did not think of the mysterious stranger now. This attempt at locking him up recalled the brutal assault of Crittles and his wife and their vicious glances at the stair foot, and his only desire was to escape. He heard Peter kicking and bellowing behind him, but he knew he could not be heard at the bottom of the house. Still time was precious, and on he sped. He did not wait for steps. As he came to the head of each flight he threw himself on the hand-rail, and slid to the bottom.

The speed made his breath come and go quickly,

and, as he paused on the landing that overlooked the lighted hall, his heart throbbed violently with apprehensions. The thought of imprisonment made even homeless liberty seem sweeter. He heard the clatter of dishes below, and knew that Cilly and her mother were supplying Kitty's place in the kitchen. One deep breath and he laid his hand upon the rail for the last slide. But his pause had killed his opportunity, for at that moment the door of the front parlour opened, and Mr. Crittles appeared, calling Priscilla.

Charley retreated into the darkness, and the girl clattered up from the kitchen. He heard her father whisper to her, and his heart sank as her feet sounded on the stairs coming toward him. He fled up before her as noiselessly as he could, but she heard his footsteps, and began to call Peter softly. It would never do to continue upward. He must pass her before she got within hearing of her brother's voice, which even now came indistinctly from above. The darkness favoured him, and he drew in to the wall to let her pass. She came up panting with the exertion. She was passing by him when one of her awkward, swinging hands came in contact with his, and she gave a little scream:

"Oh, Peter! Why didn't you speak? How you frightened me! Have you looked him in?"

"Yes," whispered Charley, hardly knowing what to say.

"Yes," said Cilly, "I hear him pounding. Isn't he a tiger?"

"Isn't he though?" whispered Charley, who was estimating his chances of looking her up, too, without raising an alarm.

"Hurry!" she said; "he wants you in the parlour. The dark gentlemen want to see you. Isn't it funny, Peter? I wonder how you and pa can keep from laughing when he calls you Charley."

"Yes, very funny," whispered Charley, in a bewildered manner; for his head was reeling, and the blood was rushing like molten metal through his veins.

"Come quick, Peter!" said the girl, snatching him by the hand. "Why, how you tremble! Don't let pa see you tremble. He says that you must mind your P's and Q's. You were near spoiling it once. But you have practised enough since. How that Charley pounds! He'll break the door. Hurry, or pa will be after you."

"You go up and watch him," whispered Charley. "Go go up in the dark," she cried; "and him break loose and kill me! No, I shan't."

"Well, go down first."

"What's the matter?" We will go together."

"Come, then," whispered the boy, desperately, for he had come to the resolve of bearding the lion and exposing the fraud he had just discovered.

They went down the stairs together, the girl still holding his hand.

"Won't Charley get it for all his thumping when the gentlemen goes? Mr. says she wishes he had been drowned, and that Quillington too, and an end of it."

Charley shuddered, and his desperate resolution grew weak as he saw the glimmer of light below and thought of the desperate hands in which he was. His limbs grew weak, too, as the critical moment approached.

"Ma got the cutting-whip," said Cilly, "and she says she'll make pa thrash him within an inch of his life, and that he'll take the temper out of him."

The whirl of exciting emotions raised by the girl's words had already set the boy's brain on fire, and these were too much for him.

"Will he?" he cried. "Confound him, let him try!"

The girl gave a scream and tried to cling to him, but he cast her aside, and sprang to the landing with one bound. He threw himself on the rail and slid to the bottom like a flash.

Cilly still screamed lustily. The front door was nearest, but he turned instinctively to the back. He reached the door and was dashing back the bolts when Mrs. Crittles, rushing up the basement stairs, seized him.

At the same moment he saw Crittles and the stranger burst from the front parlour door. The strength of terror and desperation came to him. He tore away the woman's hands and struck her as that she fell. One bound to the door, another to the edge of the fence and he swung himself on to the snow-covered ground, and was off like a deer.

"What! What is it?" cried Crittles, in pale affright, for the whole action had been so quick that he could not understand it.

"Oh, pa! Oh, pa!" gasped Cilly. "It's Charley. He's gone. He knows all!"

"Knows all?" shouted Crittles, furiously, snatching the girl by the two shoulders and shaking her.

"Knows all?"

"Oh, pa, pa!" screamed the terrified girl, "I—I thought he was Peter—and—I—told—him—"

With a fierce imprecation the stranger tore open the door and rushed from the house.

Crittles rushed up the stairs. In a moment he returned bounding down the stairs, roaring like a wild beast—with flecks of foam flying from his mouth.

His wife ran towards him in affright, for he was tearing at his hair with one hand and his cravat with the other.

"What is it, Ezra? What is it?" she exclaimed.

"It is! It is!" he cried, with a choking gurgle, that sounded horribly like and yet unlike a laugh.

"It is, Cora, that I'm a ruined man. The boy has stolen the papers! and I'm a ruined man!"

He reeled for an instant, clutched at the balustrades for support—missed them, and fell heavily upon his face.

There was trouble in the house of Crittles.

And Charley Gale's battles had begun.

Driven wildly forward by the great panic which had seized upon him, Charley Gale held on over the uneven road through the whirling storm.

Sometimes, notwithstanding his knowledge of the ground, he tripped and fell, bruising his body on the ice-covered stones, or scraping his hands and face on the broken snow-crusts; but the fear of pursuit overcame fatigue and pain, and hurried him onward.

On a frozen mound at some distance he paused, pantingly, to look back in the direction of his fear. The fleecy curtain of whirling snowflakes shut out Crittles's house.

He saw nothing but the bleak mounds near him, and beyond them the ghastly glimmer of a row of street lamps.

He heard nothing but the muffled strokes of iron hoofs, but these sounds came from the gloom like voices of encouragement.

His terror somewhat subsided, and a feeling of shame at his flight came over him.

"Why should I run away?" he asked himself.

"This stranger must have been a friend, or why should Crittles try to pass off Peter for me? It must have been to get what should be mine? It must have been me that he was acting. Why? Great goodness, if this man should be my father! Will I go back and tell him what a villain Crittles is, and who I am, and ask him who he is? I will! I was a coward to run at all. I'll go back and show them I have pluck to demand my own."

Filled with this resolution he descended the mound, rapidly retracing his steps, and muttering his quick thoughts as he went; but he had not gone far when his speed slackened, and at last he came to a full stop.

Doubt had seized possession of his mind, and all his boy reasoning was at work in this manner:

"I'm afraid it's not safe. That stranger didn't look like a friendly or an honest man. He comes in too sneaking a manner to be on honest business, and besides there's nobody could associate with Crittles without knowing what he is. Besides, he can't be my father; or he'd know that beebey, Pete, couldn't be me. No. It's not safe. If he was my father why should he come stealing round like Guy Fawkes? Why should he be ashamed of me and let Crittles palm off Pete upon him? I'm cleverer than Pete—I'm better-looking than Pete—I'd be ashamed to be compared to Pete."

For one instant the boy's figure straightened up with a dignity appropriate to these sentiments, but the cold wind blowing on his thin, damp clothes caused his hands to seek his pockets, and his teeth to chatter, while his sides quivered painfully as he inhaled the frosty air.

"This won't do," he said, doubtfully. "I can't go back there and put myself in Crittles's power. When they wished that I had been drowned and done with, and were going to cut me with a whip, and want to make Pete personate me, they would think very little of murdering me in any other way. They would think nothing of murdering me. That stranger looked as if he had a bowie-knife under his cloak; and Crittles looked like a murderer when he dragged me by the hair, and there was murder in Mrs. Crittles's eyes when she struck me, and Cilly and Pete are just as ornery. No. I'll not go back," he said, with a shudder, as he turned round and hurried on, feeling that he was safer beneath the gloomy canopy of Heaven than under the roof he had quitted.

But this was the first time he had ever stood homeless and homeless in the stormy night, and everything seemed doubtful before him.

The future was as misty as the past.

He had cast off the yoke, and now possessed the liberty he wished for; but to a boy abroad in a large city, in a night storm, ill-clad and moneyless, the prospects of liberty were anything but alluring. Still the reader must not think that Charley Gale's pluck dwindled in this emergency.

As his desolate situation rose more darkly before him his heart grew strong to battle all odds. He had determined to be independent, he thought, and it was better now than later.

To-morrow he would look for work and get it. There must be such lots of establishments where

they would be glad to get a good boy and a clever boy who was willing to work; and there were plenty—plenty—why, there were thousands—of kind-hearted persons who would at once recognize in him the goodness, ability and willingness required, and engage him immediately. Oh, no doubt of that either, thought he. But then for the night what should he do? The night could not last for ever. Better to stand one night of cold than endure an endless tyranny at Crittles's. To be sure the wind was becoming fiercer and colder, and the snow was being drifted up on the footways in reefs and banks; and his damp clothes were cold against his skin and the outer portions of them were hardening with the frost, and he very much wished he had his overcoat (he had dropped it when jumping the fence), and a little something to eat wouldn't be out of place; still he would weather it through. He could make the time seem short by walking about the basest streets; and he could keep himself warm by taking an occasional run. The night would pass in no time, and the ruddy sun would jump up bright and early, making the snow look pink and setting the window-panes afire, and the cheeriness of the day would doubly pay for the gloominess of the night, especially as it would be his independence day.

Ha! ha! Who cared for cold or darkness? He felt the warmth and light of liberty. Who cared for hunger? He had often fasted longer than that when Mrs. Crittles pretended punishment and meant economy.

He would not go back to Crittles. No, never! never!

By-the-by why should he go back to Crittles? Had not Kitty got the papers that held his secret? Ho! ho! How stupid not to think of that before! He must find Kitty, and he started down the street on a jog trot.

He was jogging along in this manner, his thoughts clattering away as fast as his teeth chattered, when a bus passed on a little way in front of him and stopped in answer to a hail from behind him, and the next moment Charley distinguished the sound of heavy feet plumping in the snow.

He looked back, and a cold thrill ran through him from head to foot as his eyes fell upon the tall, cloaked figure of a man hastening toward him.

He could not be mistaken. It was the same person he had seen at Crittles's. He had the same dim view of him, and he saw the long hair, the broad felt hat and the dark-moustached face. But now the doubt was whether the stranger had hailed the boy, for he kept on the footway straight towards where Charley had turned.

Charley at first was in doubt whether to fly or stand his ground, but as the man approached and he saw that he was alone his course was taken. The stranger looked wild and excited; he was breathless with running and his eyes gleamed like those of a hunted panther. When quite near the boy, he turned from the kerb towards the waiting bus. Charley knew by this action that he was not in pursuit of him, and with the knowledge came a strange impulse to intercept the man who he had feared would intercept him.

"Wait, sir," he said, springing directly before him.

"What is it?" cried the stranger, with a growl.

"Are you not the gentleman who was lately at Mr. Crittles's about a boy?"

The stranger, pushing the boy roughly from him, dashed towards the bus.

"Oh, wait, sir. You do not understand. Listen to me!" cried Charley, following him rapidly.

As the stranger got inside the bus started, and when Charley in his eagerness jumped upon the step, the conductor, thinking, likely, that he was some homeless creature begging, gave him a charitable push with his foot which sent him reeling until he fell into the road, where another bus was near ending his days.

"Get up! What are you a layin' down there for?" shouted the driver, as he gathered himself from among the horses' feet.

Charley did not mind him but dashed off as fast as his legs could carry him in the direction of the other bus.

He had a great desire now to follow this person who seemed to be so fearful of pursuit. But his chase was useless; the bus had a good start, and gained continually. On such a stormy night there were few passengers to stop for. In a short time it disappeared in the snowy distance, and Charley gave up in despair and turned his attention to the finding of Kitty.

It was getting late, he would not call on her that night, but finding the place would help to pass the long hours, and the first thing in the morning he would claim the knowledge she held.

In pursuance of this plan he approached the snow-splashed window of a druggist's shop to examine Kitty Nolan's curious note which he had thrust into his jacket when he attacked Peter. It was missing!

He searched every pocket in his clothes, but without success.

This was a vexatious and startling discovery. Peter's interruption had hindered him from reading the long-winded, wrong-ended address, and he had no other means of finding the kind-hearted writer. Thus were his hopes dashed to pieces. Besides, if he had lost it in the short struggle with Peter it would lead to the detection of Kitty's friendly theft, and the recovery of the all-important papers by Crittles.

This thought put Charley in a fever of excitement. He must be asked of Crittles, both for the sake of Kitty and his own secret. He had a notion that he was directed to ascend several pairs of stairs situated in some street within six doors of the corner of some other street—and that was all. But his eagerness to find the place made him imagine a street, and he hurried away towards it.

He failed to discover the object of his search, and after many other similar unsuccessful attempts his heart failed him when at last he stood both weary and faint and cold in the frozen streets, with the storm whistling round him.

Now that the evening search, which had kept his blood in circulation, was over he became chilled and miserable—his disappointment weighed heavily on him, making the future seem as black as the winter night, and he found to an awing post to nerve himself against the feeling of despair that tempted him to lie down and give up. Cold and hunger are great reducers of courage, and Charley Gale's pluck was beginning to waver. He didn't look forward any more to the brilliant sunrise, and his plans for passing the night were forgotten. He shrank from the storm to the doorway of a shop and huddled his benumbed form into one corner to escape the wind. Here he would surely have frozen to death but that a good angel appeared in the form of a policeman, who, striking his hand sharply against the shutters, said, hoarsely:

"Here you, young fellow! Up out of this and move!"

"Oh, sir!" cried Charley, rising to his feet in a startled manner.

"No talk!" growled the officer. "Get away home. A purty time o' night for a kid like you to be loafin' round the corners. Off with you."

In obedience to this stern order Charley naturally turned his face away, and started off, hardly feeling his legs beneath him. Whenever he attempted to take to shelter a policeman, sometimes seen, sometimes unseen, would call out to him:

"Get on now! What d'ye want there?"

And on he went, aimlessly, now one way, now another—only desirous to avoid the officers and pass the time. This enforced activity, needless as it seemed, was the means of saving his life, for if he had been allowed to yield to the weakness and stupor produced by the cold he would certainly have been frozen to death. Still it was dreadfully dreary. Everybody had deserted the bleak streets but the muffled policemen, who seemed to begrudge him a share of the storm; all else were in their homes—mean or rich. No. There were two exceptions, that struck him with terror and pity.

A drunken man tumbled helplessly through the storm, covered with blood and snow, muttering the most fearful blasphemies at every stumble. Charley could not help watching him; he expected something dreadful to happen. The man, after a staggering run in the endeavour to keep his feet, fell heavily with a cry and a groan. At the instant an officer burst from the shadow and rushed upon him, seizing him by the collar, and dragging him to his feet. The drunkard resisted fiercely. There was a short, confused tussle, a sickening "thud" of a staff, and the man went down like an ox, uttering such a howl of pain as the boy never forgot.

Charley hurried away in affright.

He had not gone far when he was startled by a loud, wild wail that rose and fell fitfully as the storm caught it and bore it in swirls and eddies beneath the awnings and round the corners, and away like the shriek of a ghost up the gloomy fronts of the houses. A miserable wreck of a woman was singing before an oyster saloon, with the glare of the lamp tinting her haggard face and the wind fluttering her tattered garments. The snow was thick against the window panes, and it was little likely that any one within heard one tone of her strained voice, but she sang on, and Charley stopped to listen. He had never seen anything so desolate before, and his heart was touched. Sympathy in misfortune. But the inevitable officer came with his everlasting:

"Get along, now!"

And the singer flattered away into the darkness like a guilty spirit, while Charley sorrowfully resumed his cold tramp in the other direction with his heart saddened and yet strengthened, for he thought that he, a young boy, had no right to despair when he saw this weak woman as hungry, as homeless, and as much hurried-on as himself.

But the momentary courage which this thought gave him died away after a while's dreary plunging along the desolate streets. The blood was running sluggishly in his veins, he felt less and less able to move his limbs, and even the act of breathing was painful. He thought the night was growing darker and longer, and hope deserted him.

On and on he struggled until at last, as he cast his eyes despairingly eastward for some sign of daybreak, he found that chance or habit had led him to the Quillington academy, which loomed up darkly against the stormy sky, and he dragged himself wearily down the area steps under the shelter of the high portico.

Here he felt he had a right to rest—no policeman would dare to chase him from this spot. If they tried it he would talk back to them.

He would tell them that he belonged to the establishment, that Mr. Quillington was his tutor—may, his friend—and would not see him injured.

And then, as he gathered himself away into the most sheltered corner, he thought of this strange friendship which the principal held toward him, and he wondered at its cause and at their strange interview, and at the principal's prophecy of the coming troubles, which it would require all his pluck to combat, and he gave a shivering sigh to think how unequal that pluck was to this first combat with the elements.

But he would do better in the future. Who could combat the elements?

Let it be men, or lions, or tigers, and they should find that Charley Gale had pluck.

Then his imagination pictured all those dangers which he was doomed to encounter. He saw gangs of cloaked men with gleaming daggers, and crowds of Crittles with bundles of papers and cutting whips, and squads of gruff policemen with bludgeons—but he fought them all, he conquered them all.

We are all conquerors in our dreams, and Charley Gale was dreaming.

His enemies faded away mistily—mistily—and friends came glowingly forward from out the shadows. Behind which the others had disappeared; troops of friends there were, but first and foremost came the angelic woman of his childish memories, led by Mr. Quillington and Kitty Nolan, and the happy dreamer was wrapped in her embrace, and heard her low, joyous sobbing, and felt her tears showering upon his face.

Poor Charley! The sobbing was the howl of the pitiless storm-wind, and the tear-drops were the drifting snow-flakes that were silently but swiftly weaving his shroud.

CHAPTER VIII.

I am as a weed

Flung from the rock on ocean's foam to sail,
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail. Byron.

PETER CRITTLES, having succeeded in breaking from his imprisonment, added to the confusion in the hall by his loud complaints and threats. The threats were only indulged in when he found that Charley had flown, and before he obeyed his mother's command to pursue the fugitive he satisfied himself by careful survey that there was no danger of his overtaking him. Then he dropped over the fence, and returned almost instantly with Charley's overcoat as a trophy, and a wordy account of the utter disappearance of its owner, which, being finished he rushed to the supper-table, leaving the revival of his father to the females.

Ezra Crittles was not so sensitive or so senseless a man as to be long under any emotional effect which was likely to interfere with his interest. A very few pinches in the ears and a very few sniffs of hartshorn brought him raging to his feet, and the full fury of his anger burst upon the devoted head of Cilly. He rushed savagely at the girl, and would doubtless have shaken her frightened soul from her body but for the interference of his wife, who threw her stately figure between him and his intended victim.

"For shame!" she cried. "Have patience, Ezra, have patience."

"Patience!" he roared, tragically. "Don't talk to me of patience. Have I not patience when she lives?"

"Oh, Ezra! Ezra!"

"Don't call me Ezra!" he cried, hysterically. "When you talk of patience call me Job—call me Job!"

"If you will listen to me I will call you anything!" exclaimed the wife.

"Do, Cora, do—call me anything!" he sobbed.

"Call me anything—what's in a name? The substance is gone, and a name is neither here nor there. That which was to raise my name has disappeared, and I am a ruined man. The miserable minx! why should she gabble?—why should she mar my plans?—why should a prattling poll-parrot tell where my papers were placed?—why should she know?"

"Oh, pa, I didn't tell—I didn't know!" sobbed Cilly.

"Don't dare to speak to me," he cried, savagely. "Don't dare to aggravate me. Was it for this that I struggled through the long years to find out the secret of that boy's parentage, and the reason of my being paid for keeping him that I might turn the knowledge to my own advantage? Was it for this I spent my money and suffered disappointments that would have broken the heart of any man less bent on getting ahead in the world? Was it for this that, when Providence threw that knowledge within my reach, I broke professional trust, and sent a client to prison in order that I might get possession of those papers? Was it for this my fatherly feeling, prompted me to substitute my boy for him? Oh, Cora, was it for this?"

"Ezra, I am ashamed of you!" exclaimed Mrs. Crittles, impatiently. "I should think it was for this, you seem to like this so well. Will crying mend the matter? I should say not. Instead of falling down and frightening us, you should have followed the young rascal, got back the papers, and—"

The woman paused, but there was an awful significance in her eye, before which Crittles shrank, and his arm quivered in the painful clutch of her strong hand. His rage vanished before her master spirit, and he glanced towards Cilly in a terrified manner. His wife, noticing this, imperiously waved her daughter away, and the trembling daniel, glad of the relief, bolted past her enraged parent, and hurried down to the lower regions.

"Why should this interrupt your plan?" questioned the female Crittles (it seemed to be the manner of the Crittles family to speak in questions). "What harm can the boy do? He will starve or freeze in the streets. We wanted to get rid of him, and he is gone. He cannot injure you. He knows nothing, for Cilly knew nothing to tell him—and if he did who would take the word of a beggarly boy against that of a professional man?"

"But—the papers, my dear, the papers?" said Mr. Crittles.

"What of the papers?" she answered, snappishly. "Who will understand anything from them without explanation? Besides, he dare not produce them. Keep a lookout for him, and if he appears arrest him for theft, and send him to prison. You know all they contain. You can do without them."

Crittles raised his eyes to his wife's face, with an admiring glitter, but almost immediately they sank again in cloudy doubt.

"But you do not consider, Cora," he said, "that the purpose of a boy in stealing a handful of dusty papers would be wondered at, and—explanations would be required, which, to say the least, it would be very inconvenient for me to give."

"Add another purpose," whispered Mrs. Crittles, impressively. "Make it a real theft."

"A real theft?" said Crittles, looking at her inquiringly.

"Seeming real at least," she said. "Something sufficient to draw attention from those papers, and send him to prison for three or four years."

"But how, my dear?" said Crittles, with a bewildered smile. "If we could only do that—but how?"

"How? Ezra, you're dull," said the woman, with a smile of superiority, pointing to Charley's coat, which Peter had thrown across the hand-rail.

Ezra looked as muddy as the moon in a mist. Mrs. Crittles smiled again, with the slightest tinge of contempt, removed the great shield of a brooch from her neck, half stripped a couple of her fingers of their over-adornment of rings, plucked the handkerchief from the breast-pocket of the boy's coat, wrapped the jewellery in it and put it back again.

"There!" she said, triumphantly, turning to Crittles, whose face looked as foggy as a sheet of cotton wadding. "Call Peter."

Peter was called and came with his mouth full.

Thereupon they adjourned to the parlour and Mrs. Crittles proceeded to develop her plan. Peter was to take the coat, follow carefully on the tracks of the fugitive for some short distance, and then deposit it as if it had been dropped by Charley in his flight. Crittles was to lodge information of the robbery with the police, while she wrote an advertisement to be inserted in the morning papers describing the missing property and offering a reward for its recovery and the arrest of the thief.

Ezra Crittles lay back in his chair and gazed at his clever wife in admiration and bewilderment. The lady noticed the homage to her genius and became condescendingly explanatory.

"You see, my dear," she said, "we don't care what comes of the boy. The offer of reward will raise the hue and cry in the morning. It will advertise you, it will terrify him so that he will hide or fly the country, so we shall be rid of him. If he should be caught you will recover those papers and put him out of the way."

"Good! Good!" said Crittles, reflectively, draw-



["WAIT, SIR."]

ing the curtain aside to look out of the window, against which the fine, powdery snow was pelting.

Mrs. Crittles was writing vigorously at a desk. "But, my dear," said Crittles, "the jewellery, you know. If it should be dropped now it would be buried with snow by the morning. It would be lost. No one could find it."

"Besides," grumbled Peter, "who could see to follow his tracks such a night as this? His tracks are covered now."

"You are a pair of simpletons," remarked Mrs. Crittles. "The coat need not be deposited until early dawn."

"But," said Crittles, "if some unconscionable person were to pick it up?"

"Oh, bother!" cried the lady. "Peter can watch until the policemen find it."

Crittles was silent, and for some minutes the scratching of the lady's pen was the only sound heard besides the sleet heard against the window-panes.

"Now," she said, at length, turning in her seat with the sheet of paper in her hand, "I should say this is the thing:

"One Hundred Pounds Re-ward!"

"One hundred pounds!" cried Crittles, in astonishment, "Why, you know, my dear—"

"I know," said the lady, severely, "that it is necessary to make a show. One hundred—"

"But—but, my dear—"

"Don't interrupt me, please," said Mrs. Crittles, frowning him silent. "One hundred pounds reward—"

"But," cried Crittles, desperately, "whoever finds these things, be it policeman or otherwise, will claim the reward."

"Peter shall claim it!" cried the lady, theatrically.

"Oh, ah, yes, I see!" cried Crittles, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Peter will be on the watch; he will accompany them; he will seize the prize in their sight. Beautiful, far-seeing. Cora, my love, you're a miraculous woman."

"One hundred pounds reward!" resumed the lady, in the manner of a sheriff reading a death warrant. "The above sum will be paid to the person giving such information—"

"No, no, my dear," said Mr. Crittles, mildly. "Allow me to object. That is my profession. You are too simple, too commonplace—you sound too like looking for a lost puppy. We must make it impressive, terrifying. Coming from a lawyer it will be expected."

Now that he had the whole plan before him and saw that it was without danger, personal or pecu-

niary, his mean heart took courage, and he sailed in and seized the direction of affairs as if he had been the originator of the scheme. The command was not yielded up without some bickering, but after many contradictions and alterations the proclamation was completed to the satisfaction of the rival composers, and read thus:

"ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD!
Whereas, on the night of the nineteenth day of January, 18—, the House of Ezra Crittles, Esq., was robbed of a large quantity of jewellery and other property, consisting of plate, ornaments, etc.; and whereas the sudden, unaccountable and simultaneous flight of Charles Gale, formerly an inmate of the house, makes suspicion point directly to him as principal or accessory to the theft—now this, therefore, is to proclaim that the said Ezra Crittles, Esq., will pay the sum of One Hundred Pounds Reward to any person or persons who shall be instrumental in causing the arrest of the said Charles Gale and the recovery of the before-mentioned property. N. B.—The above-named Charles Gale is about sixteen years old, tall for his age and slim in figure. He has dark hair, blue eyes and pale features, which some people call handsome."

The postscript was Mrs. Crittles's, every word. "But he couldn't steal any plate, pa," said Peter, because we haven't—"

"Shut up!" roared both the proclamationists in a breath, and Peter wilted.

"It has just struck me, my dear," said Crittles, brilliantly, "that it is an excellent opportunity for me to write an item for the morning papers. Going in with the 'ad' it'll will be sure of insertion. I can do it better than the reporters. I'll do it!"

"Do!" said Mrs. Crittles. "But make it short, for time flies."

Peter and she proceeded to make duplicates of the proclamation, while Crittles threw himself fervently into the labour of composition. After much scratching of head and up-turning of eyes the following was read for approval:

"A PECULIAR CASE OF CRIME AND INGRATITUDE.—It becomes our duty this morning to lay before our readers the most aggravated case of youthful depravity which it has ever been our lot to record. In the early part of last evening as the eminent lawyer, Ezra Crittles, Esq., was enjoying the comforts of his luxurious home in the bosom of his interesting family, he was alarmed by the voice of his beautiful daughter crying "Help! robbers!" from the upper part of his house. As quickly as could be he hurried to the spot, but the villains had already made good their escape, and the agitated husband and father arrived only in time to find his daughter clinging to the stair-rail in a fainting con-

dition, and his wife stripped of her jewellery lying insensible in the hall. As soon as the ladies were sufficiently recovered to speak the gentleman learned, to his inexpressible grief and astonishment, that the leader of this daring outrage was an inmate of his own house, a young viper whom he had fostered with a father's care since earliest childhood—although the unnatural ingrate had no farther claim upon him than that which outcast and suffering humanity ever has on the tender and benevolent heart. The eminent gentleman and his estimable lady are more grieved at the baseness of the boy's ingratitude than at the loss of the property, which by-the-by was considerable. They had set their hearts upon him, and this was their reward. It is hoped that the young criminal will be speedily brought to the punishment he so richly merits. The affair is causing great excitement in the neighbourhood in which it occurred and we have dispatched a special reporter to the scene to gain the full particulars. Should developments warrant it an extra will be issued in the course of the day."

Mrs. Crittles was delighted with this composition, merely suggesting that the idea of a person fostering a viper with a father's care might reflect upon the character of the fosterer, but Mr. Crittles assured her that it was a purely figurative expression, and it was allowed to pass. Copies having been made of this also, Peter was despatched to put the two important documents into the newspapers, and Mr. and Mrs. Crittles sat down to their long-delayed supper, greatly elevated in each other's opinion and their own.

"Cora," said Crittles, as he stirred his tea, "I didn't study for nothing."

"No, Ezra," said Cora, "nor have I enjoyed your company without profiting."

"You are a wonderful woman, Cora!"

"But you, Ezra, you are tremendous!"

"Ah, yes," said Crittles, swelling like the frog in the fable, "I have done a thing or two—I have looked ahead. We want this boy removed. Where can we put him that he cannot trouble us? In prison? It is done! I want the witness of his father's murder—of the dying testament—of his rights—I want him—but not before I need him. Where shall I put him that he may not be tampered with, that I may lay my finger on him when I need him? In prison? He is there! He cannot budge till I call him."

"Not so! He is here!" roared a rough, thundering voice, and the china danced again as Crittles and his wife sprang from their seats and glared with terror on a great, rough figure bursting through the dining-room doorway.

(To be continued.)



[HUSBAND AND LOVER.]

THE FOOT TICKLER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Evelyn's Plot," "Darcy's Child," "One Spark of Gold," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXII.

He who hath loved not here would learn that love, And make his heart a spirit; he who knows That tender mystery will love the more. For this is Love's recess, when vain men's loves And the world's waste have driven him far from them.

For 'tis his nature to advance or die.

"FRANCESCA, I am better to-day. Grant me but one boon," said Irene Villiers to her attendant as she laid down the daily papers, which were at the moment her sole connection with the outer world, and gazed with touching piteousness into the hard, unyielding features of the domestic appointed to guard her, under the pretext of service, during her husband's absence.

She looked strangely sweet and lovely in her fragile delicacy, which had gained perhaps something of its former beauty since the respite she had enjoyed of late.

Yes, it was a respite from constant irritation, from incessant struggle with her own sorrowing, rebellious heart—perhaps from more than was patent to the nearest and most intimate of those who surrounded her.

Even Francesca could scarcely resist the influence of that pleading look, those mournful eyes, that sweet, submissive tone.

"You know that Mr. Villiers will hold me responsible for your health and safety during his absence, madam," she returned, more respectfully than was her wont. "But if you only wish for something harmless to both, and I can gratify your wish, I promise you I will not hesitate. Will that satisfy you, madam?"

"Yes. I would not wish you to forego your duty on my account," was the soft, gentle reply. "Heaven forbid that I should be the cause of misery or disgrace to any one," she continued, sadly, "when I have suffered so deeply myself."

"Well then, I will not refuse you if I can help it," exclaimed the woman, impatiently. "Just tell me what you want, that's all."

Irene still hesitated.

Perhaps she feared to explain her request from some unacknowledged delicacy of her woman's temperament, albeit to the best of her belief there could be no possible clue to the cause of its intense desire. Or it might be that she had a presentiment of evil,

though she could scarcely know from what quarter it could come.

However, the hesitation was vanquished, the pause that attracted Francesca's keen anxiety was brought to an end, and Irene's pensive, soft tones were again heard in the silence.

"Francesca, you may perhaps scarcely understand the wayward fancy," she said, at length, "but I should like—oh, so much—to pay one last and only visit to the Rookery."

"The Rookery!" repeated Francesca, in a tone that betrayed at least some peculiar associations with the place thus indicated. "Why, madam, my master has no acquaintance there that I know of, and I am sure he would not like you to go without him."

"Nor would I," returned Irene, anxiously, "but it is empty now, Francesca. The owners are away, and all that I wish is just to take one last survey of its well-remembered scenes and bid them farewell for ever. Have you no such associations of your childhood, your early girlhood, Francesca? Can you not enter into my yearnings for this one last innocent gratification?"

Francesca might perhaps have had some such solitary morsel of romance—what Italian is likely to be without love and sorrow enshrined in the memory?—and a momentary emotion moistened her eyes as she turned away to conceal the incipient yielding to the associations thus called up.

"How do you know it? Why do you imagine that the family are away from the Rookery?" she asked, hoarsely.

"See here," returned Irene, pushing one of the papers towards her.

Francesca's eyes hastily ran over the indicated paragraph.

"We understand that Miss Vyvian, the heiress of the property of the late Mr. C. Vyvian, of the Rookery, is slowly recovering from her late severe, and as was apprehended, hopeless illness. The young lady, however, is still at her residence in St. James's Square, under the care of the eminent physicians who have all along attended her in conjunction with her family adviser, Doctor Wray. But so soon as she can be removed with safety we believe that a voyage to the South which has been advised will be undertaken by the fair invalid."

"You see," said the girl, eagerly, "there can be no fear of any contact, Francesca. It is but one brief drive, one short, sad pleasure, and I ask no more."

"And alone, or with others?" asked the maid, sharply.

"You or any one, half a dozen if you choose, can

go with me," said Irene Villiers, impatiently, "but I must be alone there—yes, yes, quite alone. It would be like a prison, like chaining fetters for a stranger's eye to watch while I looked on those dear, familiar objects, each one of which recalls something that is dear and precious to memory. I will not be unreasonable, I will not detain you long, just one half or at most one clear, sad hour, and then all will be over, and the past buried for ever."

"Well, well, it must be as you ask for this once," returned the woman, turning away from the meek pleading, the soft touch, the bright tears that had a magical power in them. "But remember that it is the last indulgence I will permit. Nay, one hint of any more such folly and it shall at once be made known to your husband and my master."

"Thanks, thanks, I will never ask more," said the beautiful suppliant, humbly. "May Heaven bless you for the one sweet drop you infuse into my bitter lot, Francesca. It will indeed bind me to you for ever," she added, eagerly.

"There, there, enough, it will do," was the sharp rejoinder. "If you say much more I shall begin to think you have some deeper project in your head than going over an old, empty house. But, if so, I advise you to take care. There will be a sufficient watch kept, I can tell you. Besides, what could it avail, I should like to know? Where can you be better than in your own house, and under the care of a husband that doats on you, and won't let you be unguarded for a single hour?" she added, as if to apply a panacea to her conscience for the compromise she was making between duty and pity, her binding oath and the discretion that she was casuist enough to apply to its fulfilment.

She was there once again, poor, desolate Irene, there where her happiest years had been spent, there where her brief dream of love had wrapt her senses in a sweet illusion, and where all spoke to her of him, the faithless, but, alas, for her the still beloved and remembered one.

Irene had wandered through some of the most familiar spots in the grounds, she had sat in the summer-house that used to be the favourite play-room of childhood, the floral sitting-room in later years, and the scene of Victor's open though timid first avowal of love.

After lingering as long as she dared in that hallowed ground she re-entered the mansion, and sought a brief repose in the library, where she and her girlhood's lover had often shared studies. Every object that met her view seemed impregnated as it were with the spirit of love. Her picture still hung there,

in its old resting-place. She sat in the very chair where Victor had some months before gazed fondly, despairingly on that very portrait, and the tears flooded in unconscious silence as she recalled the hours when that had been painted, with all the fond criticisms that had been made on it by her young lover.

"Why is it not banished?" she murmured; "it can be but a despoiled and painful object now. Hither Victor has utterly forgotten, or he must suffer in seeing my image there. Oh, Victor, Victor, if you but only knew the suffering you have caused—the lifelong misery which will be mine; and, oh, may it be brief," she went on, clasping her hands convulsively. "May it please Heaven to take me and deliver me from this bondage—this living death. May he be happy with her, poor Victor!" murmured her sweet tones, which sounded like the wail of an Italian harp.

"Irene, Irene, there can be no happiness save with you," exclaimed a passionate voice near her. "My life, my love, my all, I cannot endure this torture, absence, and—"

The large, blue eyes were turned on him with a questioning, child-like gaze, as if to ask his meaning, to doubt the reality of such avowal, such words, such looks.

Then as he opened his arms in utter and irrevocable forgetfulness of all but that she he loved, was now before him—true, loving, sad, gentle as a poet's dream—she flew into them, like a wounded, moaning bird—and laid her head in glad repose and shelter upon his shoulder. Eustace, her bond, her marriage vows, all vanished like a hideous nightmare. And for the moment the reunited pair went back long years in that brief but intense and engrossing bliss.

But even as he clasped her hand in his, as his other supported her light form, and his half-raised her to gaze on her sweet face, his finger pressed the gold circlet that was the badge of her slavery, and her woe, and the slight pain it inflicted recalled her to herself.

She sprang from his embrace like a guilty thing. "Oh, this is sin, dear Victor," she exclaimed, piteously, "a grievous sin. You are pledged—the betrothed of another; and I—See here," she wailed, sadly, displaying her fatal wedding-ring in a kind of despair that risked all torture rather than suspense.

"Then it was true! You did change—you did forget me, Irene," he said. "You were too gently nurtured; too highly bred, for a poor man's bride. Well, perhaps it was natural. You did not pledge yourself to the portionless and disinherited nephew of the wealthy Mr. Vyvian, but to the heir of the Rookery and its broad lands."

Irene's eyes were dilated to their fullest extent now. "Victor, what is all this?" she said, in a low, gasping tone. "There is some dreadful mistake, some misunderstanding. Explain yourself, Victor, in pity. I change because you were poor! I despise the disinherited when I would have flown to your side to comfort you! You are cruel to speak thus," she added, indignantly, as the very repetition of her wrongs seemed to bring back the suffering they had caused, "to misinterpret me so cruelly."

Victor's face varied from doubt to hope and fear and despair during her passionate words.

"Irene, you surely cannot forget your own letter, the utter dismissal of my suit, the breaking off of every tie between us. What did that mean, coming as it did just at the moment when my uncle's death left me a beggar?" he said, sternly. "Then Celie, in her generous pity and nobleness stepped in to comfort me, to repair the wrong which she had been the innocent means of inflicting, and to heal my sorrow. It was a contrast that should have won my heart, and yet I could not, I cannot now forget. I cannot cease to love you, Irene."

His face was ashen pale with suppressed emotion, his breast heaved as he gazed at that idolized being and yet felt her to be by her own act and deed separated from him for ever.

He would fain have fled from her presence, but he could not; the magnet was too great, the temptation of looking on her, hearing her for the last time, too irresistible.

His extreme emotion perhaps moved Irene to more calm fortitude than she could have believed herself capable of assuming.

But it is in woman's nature to be strong under such circumstances, and she walked with a steady step to the side of him she loved, and laid her hand with unwavering touch on the arm that concealed his working features.

"Victor," she said, "dear Victor, for I must always look on you as a dear friend, a precious brother, tell me, would you suffer more if you believed me guiltless, or would it calm your misery to believe me to have been the victim of misrepresentation, of cruel wrong—even as yourself?"

He looked up incredulously.

"Irene, it is in vain. If I could really know that it was so, that you never changed—that you loved me still, through adversity and poverty, even as in my brighter days, it would bring balm to my soul, it would be an anchor on which I could rest, to think of you, in your bright purity, as the angel I once believed you. But no, no, that is impossible. No proof could convince me against the evidence of my senses. Your own hand did the deed, and struck the blow which rankled and ached as if an arrow were in my breast. You never truly loved me, or wherefore that?"

And he pointed to the bridal circlet on her finger. The girl looked on him like a pitying, loving angel for his spiritual, fragile purity.

"Victor, it is not so. I am innocent as yourself—true as yourself—nay, perhaps more so since I never doubted you, and you have misjudged me in your inmost soul—even to this hour. It was for your sake I freed you, Victor. It was because I would not burden you with a helpless, blind wife that I thus broke our truth. I knew that your generous heart would have confirmed the tie even more resolutely from the affliction that had befallen me. And therefore I concealed the real truth, certain that Victor would, at least, do me the justice to believe I was not base—not unworthy in my motive for the deed."

His eyes were riveted on her as she spoke, as if to read her inmost soul, to test, as it were, her candour and truth.

But when she had finished, when her voice had ceased in his ears, and the full truth had come on his bewildered brain, there was a slight pause, as if to fully allow the torture of the intelligence he had just learned to burn into his very brain.

Then he gave a cry—a hopeless cry of anguish that might well have procured pardon for more deliberate and heinous offences from one far more obdurate than the gentle Irene.

"Ah, my love, my pure, sweet love," he murmured. "Can you ever pardon me—can I ever pardon myself? How dared I think evil of one I had known and loved from childhood? But at least I have suffered, ay, and I do suffer, though, alas, alas, I fear, not alone."

And he gazed on the pale, fragile face and form before him as if his whole soul was melting in agony and love.

She was calmer now.

Yes, for his sake she could suppress her own pain, or, at least, crush it back till she could indulge it without constraint and alone.

"Nay, Victor," she said, gently. "If there is to be such bitter self-reproach on your side, I may well assume blame on mine. You could well say that I, in my turn, was faithless and unbelieving not to wait and trust in you, to discredit the evidence of my senses that seemed to show you cold and heartless. It has been a mistake—a fatal and irretrievable mistake on both sides, but, at least, we have the happiness of mutual confidence and regard to support us in our trials," she went on, her sweet face gaining an elevated calmness and fortitude as the noble effort to support her lover gave her strength.

"Victor, if you feel as I do you will, from this hour, look upon the past as a holy memory, unsullied by reproach or treachery—you will think of Irene as if she were dead, and do your duty to your future wife—to her who has the claims alike of gratitude and of love on your care. I will strive with my whole soul to keep my conscience clear from self-reproach," she said, "and fulfil the vows I have taken."

The young man could scarcely gather resolution and firmness for the pledge Irene demanded.

Perhaps a fearful suspicion clouded his mind as he recalled the past, but he could not, dared not indulge it now.

No—that way madness seemed to lie.

"But you, dearest Irene," he returned, "what of you and your fate? Is he kind, good—the man to whom you have pledged your love—your duty? I do not even know his name, nor under what circumstances you contracted the marriage."

Irene hesitated. What could she, what dared she say?

She could not stain her lips with falsehood. And yet how could she confide in that impetuous lover the dark suspicions and the one fatal secret that she had sworn to preserve?

Yet it was a sore temptation. The only living being who was associated with her early childhood and youth, the warm-hearted friend, the true lover, the chivalrous champion was, perhaps, for the last time at her side alone and unfettered.

Her life might pass without such another opportunity of confiding to some friendly ear what must otherwise be buried in her grave.

But noble truth and fidelity were strong within her, and her reply would have been in accordance with such dictates.

"My husband is," she began, but she was arrested ere the next word could escape her lips by a darkening of the light on the large bay windows, the centre of which opened on the lawn.

And then a voice, that in its bland tones was yet like a trumpet of doom in her ear, came on the silence which the frozen syllable had left.

"Excuse me, my dear wife, but it will be my pleasing duty to announce myself to your old friend with all the details that attended the happy event which has given me your charming self."

CHAPTER XXIII.

We walk not with the jewelled great

Where love's dear name is told.

Yet have we wealth we would not give

For all their world of gold.

We revel not in corn nor wine,

Yet have we from above

Manna divine, and we'll not give

While we may live and love.

"Mr. Lord, this is simple insanity, unless it is meant as a cruel, unpardonable insult," said the gifted and beautiful creature who was known by the name of the Maddolins.

The words were addressed to Lord Belmont, who had accosted her in one of the retired spots in the gardens at Versailles at an hour when that famous locality was nearly as solitary and retired as the most private park of noblesman or gentleman in our own land.

She looked in the nobleman's eyes even more lovely in her simple picturesque costume than either in the splendid toilet of Madame de Cinqmars guest or in the afternoon drive, when the distinguished prima donna had literally set the fashion in her Spanish simplicity of dress, with her black lace mantilla-like veil which well might enveloped her slight figure, her classically arranged hair, and the faultless perfection of all the minor details of the toilet. But now, when she had merely wrapped round her a scarlet cashmere, that contrasted so exquisitely with her raven hair and clear skin, and a black velvet hat with a single large rose was placed with apparent carelessness on her head, she looked like an old picture, as if she was part of those associations of the past that the stately palace recalled.

Lord Belmont had placed himself near her on the seat she had taken, facing the graceful watercourse that embellished the grounds, though he was wary enough, or respectful enough to observe a proper space between himself and the proud cantatrice.

"It is certainly no insanity to admire you, fair signorina," he replied, softly. "And, as to insult, I will swear to you, if you will, that nothing could be farther from my intentions or thought. It is true, sincere, and deep admiration that draws me towards you with a force I cannot resist."

"Then I must so far assist you as to demand from you a total cessation of this persecution," she returned, impatiently. "It is a penalty of my profession, I daresay; you told me yourself that your brother nearly fell a victim to some such folly for a sister in my art. But, at least, I can and will defend myself from its consequences, whatever that poor, unfortunate girl might have done."

"Then you know her, you can feel for her," was the quick reply.

"Pardon me," she returned, haughtily, "it is very likely that all the world knew Mademoiselle d'Albano better than I can pretend to do. But I am better qualified than most persons to appreciate her life, her trials and her fate."

"Very likely. But all this is idle," resumed Lord Belmont, impatiently. "Signora, I do not look on you as the prima donna, I consider you—admire you as a woman. Nay, I have even refrained from my usual visits to the opera, lest my illusion with respect to you might be destroyed. I admire you too much in your own character to endure to see you in another's," he added, in a low tone. "Can I give any better proof of my sincerity and my respect?"

Maddolina was silent, her dark eyes were bent on the ground, so as to display to the very full beauty her curving lashes.

Then she exclaimed, suddenly:

"Perhaps, M. Le Marquis, perhaps; but to what does the admiration tend? I might probably lay myself open to your ridicule were I to reply to these speeches with any degree of seriousness. Therefore you have me at a most unfair advantage."

"Not so, not so," resumed the young man, sadly.

"You do me and yourself injustice in supposing I could do you such wrong. Still," he added, more quietly, "I will not pretend that it can be in this case as it would be where the rank was equal and the positions demanded a more conventional treatment. Where that is the question there is but one course, to ask the hand and win if possible the heart. But, forgive me if your own frankness induces mine, where you are concerned, with all your beauty, and

gifts, it would only be for love, mutual and strong; that any idea of marriage could be entertained."

She looked at him with a keen questioning, in which contempt perhaps too plainly mingled.

"Then, in plain English, you seek me and my favourable reception of your attentions, without any definite object, my lord?"

"Yes, it is with the honest, ungovernable desire to win your heart, fair Maddolita," returned the marquis. "Listen to me ere you blame," he went on, eagerly. "I am no schoolboy to be caught by a fair face. I am old—in your estimation at least—past thirty, and mature in my own. Still I never yet saw a woman I could love well enough to make her my wife, though my rank and wealth seem to make marriage almost a duty. It would be a strange consummation were I to finish off with what is called a misalliance," he added, bitterly. "Still I confess I am not master enough of myself to say what the consequences of your indulgence would be if you can give me hope."

"In other words, my lord, you mean that if I assure you very humbly that I am prepared to properly appreciate and be grateful for the honour, you might do me the great favour to consider over an offer of your hand," said the girl, the pride of a duchess sparkling in her eyes and cheeks.

"Why, not exactly," he returned, hesitatingly. "Only what I do mean is that should my feelings to you be strengthened and deepened by your return, I would not ensure myself against committing the deed which I have refrained from for so many years. At my age, and in the whole circumstances of the case that might well be deemed an honour in even more undoubted positions than your own, lovely Maddolita."

"Then let us fully understand each other, my lord," she replied, with calm dignity. "When you are prepared to court me with the respect due to one whom you think worthy to be your wife then I will give you the answer which should remain in suspense to the suitors of a modest and high-minded woman. Till then I decline to give you any satisfaction whatever to your doubts, and must request you to indulge their solitude and leave me in peace."

It was a bold measure for an opera singer, with a coronet dancing before her eyes.

Lord Belmont turned angrily away from the proud girl who thus scorned his condescension, but the very difficulty of the pursuit did perhaps enhance its value, and ere he had taken many yards his mood changed and he returned to her side.

"Signora, it is rather a novel style of treatment for one who has been accustomed rather to be wooed than to woo," he said, in a tone that betokened more amusement than anger. "And, at my age, one scarcely is inclined to plunge without a thought into the abyss of matrimony, even under the most favourable circumstances. But, at least, I may demand courtesy and patience, even for a postponed suit, and a doubtful determination."

Maddolita had given an impatient gesture of annoyance at the commencement of the hesitating speech—but then a sharp look of anxious thought passed over her face, and she waited quietly till he had finished.

There was an air of immitable assurance that fairly perplexed Lord Belmont as she replied:

"You are too experienced in the world not to know its rules, my lord. I never knew that a lady was bound to assist a gentleman in such perplexities as yours. But when a proper and respectful proposal is laid before me I promise you my doubts will be far less prolonged and distressing than yours."

And with a provoking smile that lighted up her whole face with a new and brilliant beauty she rose and walked determinedly in an opposite direction, where her carriage awaited her.

The vehicle stopped at a pretty, bright-looking villa, near to St. Cloud, and with a splendid view of the palace gardens to recommend it to the Southern-nurtured girl.

And as she entered and sprang rapidly up the stairs to a pretty saloon, radiant with glasses and elegance and flowers, a look almost of arch gaiety lighted up the mobile face.

"Padre, padre mio," she exclaimed, throwing herself on the ground at the foot of a large chair, where a venerable, kindly-looking man sat awaiting her entrance. "Can you imagine what has happened since I went out this morning?"

"Nothing very alarming, to judge by your features, my child," he returned, fondly stroking her upturned brow. "Still I do not approve of your risking these solitary wanderings even in this civilized region—so different from the barbarous North. But what have you to tell me of your morning's adventure, *mia bella*?" he added, fondly.

"Padre, I have had an avowal of love, and a notice of a possible proposal," she returned, with a scornful smile on her pretty lips, "and from the Marquis of Belmont, an English peer. What think you of that honour to the humble cantatrice?"

"It would be honour to him were you to listen to it," replied the old man. "There are gifts which far outweigh nature and rank, and they are yours."

She smiled with a forced gaiety in her tone.

"Then you would advise it, would you, *mio padre*—you would risk all for the coronet of a marchioness, if it should be laid at my feet?" she asked, with a face half-concealed by her lace veil that still enveloped her.

"It might be the best and safest and most triumphant end to your career, my child," he replied.

"And the most fatal to peace and self-respect," she said, haughtily. "But still it may be useful in its way. And there is no fear of breaking the heart, if one stabs the pride of that cold-blooded English peer."

And she looked up in the old man's face with a confiding smile and loving gaze, for which half Paris would have given a fortune to be able to make a boast.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

'Tis strange to think if we could fling aside
The mask and mantle that love wears of pride,
How much would be we now so little guess,
Deep in each heart's undreamed, unsought recess,
The careless smile, like a gay banner borne,
So difficult to pierce its gaiety.

IRVING'S evil fate had indeed pursued her on that miserable day of her visit to the dear home so often frequented by her in childhood and early youth.

The sound of her carriage wheels had scarcely died away when the keeper of the lodge at the Park gates was startled by the rapid approach of a post-chaise and four, which dashed through the entrance with nothing but a momentary nod from its occupant to warrant the intrusion.

But old Clarkson recognized the dark features of his new master, and drew back in apparent respect and real repugnance to the unwelcome apparition.

"There, he's just come, like a spy, as he looks, to find poor dear Irene gone," muttered the old man as he returned to his post. "And it's the first time she's been out, poor dear, since her return. However, I wasn't going to say so even if he'd given me the chance. He may find it out for himself."

Eustace Villiers did indeed appear to possess second sight, since on his arrival at the door of the mansion he asked no questions of the servants who came obsequiously to meet their master, but walked straight to his wife's apartments.

"Francesca, where is your mistress?" he said, sternly, glancing round the empty rooms, which formed one complete suite, along which his quick eyes travelled like an eagle's dart.

"She is taking a drive," was the woman's cool reply, lifting her head from the work on which she was employed.

"A drive whither?" he asked, impatiently.

"To the Rookery," she said, without moving a muscle of her face. "To Miss Vyvian's noble mansion, which almost might equal your own. It is fit for two such grand heiresses to be kept in close contact with each other."

Eustace actually foamed with boiling rage, that well nigh choked his utterance.

"Woman, is it possible that you defy me? do you understand me so little as to dare such insolence?"

Francesca listened with an admirable composure to the thundering tones.

"By no means, sir. I am neither stupid nor insolent I hope," she returned, calmly. "You were condescending enough to explain in a manner your intentions and your ends, and I promised my assistance to the very utmost on certain conditions."

"One of which was that you would be instantly dismissed, and without any character, if you betrayed my confidence," said Eustace, significantly. "And that threat could be carried out far more effectually now than when it was made."

"Nay, Mr. Villiers, two can play at that game," was the significant retort. "But it's no use fighting like this, sir, when the matter is so plain and simple. Mrs. Villiers has gone to the Rookery, attended as usual by Lorenzo; and my great reason for consenting to the expedition was that it gave a better excuse than could otherwise have been obtained for going there, and thus taking the very wind out of their sails, or, in other words, ascertaining the game that is being played there."

"And what do you know of the politics of the Rookery," asked Eustace, in a somewhat milder tone, "you, who have been, as you informed me, the chief part of your life in other lands?"

"Perhaps, but Miss Vyvian was not always in England," she answered, significantly.

Eustace was attracted rather by her manner than her words.

"But what has that to do with you, Francesca? Do you mean that you had any acquaintance with

the lady, or that you know anything except the ordinary events of a girl's life, during her residence abroad?" he inquired, sharply, though there was an affected carelessness in his whole mien that strove to cover the real interest he felt.

"Ah, sir, that must depend on what you call the usual events of a young lady's life," replied the Abigail. "But, at any rate, I did know Miss Vyvian before she came over to England, and her father also."

"You did! And why on earth did you never mention this to me before?" he exclaimed, with an air of evident uneasiness.

"To tell the truth, sir, I did not know till very lately that her home was so near this, nor that it could be of any interest to you," the woman replied, calmly. "But since that I found out the connection in more ways than one, and I thought the best thing I could do was to open up a communication to pump out all their secrets, and to shut a valve as it were on our own; and there could not be a more convenient opportunity than the present, when Miss Vyvian is away, and, as they tell me, going abroad, as soon as the girl's well enough. Lorenzo is quite sharp enough for that game, I promise you, sir," she went on, with a significant nod.

For once perhaps Eustace Villiers was balked and disconcerted in his plans and ideas.

He dared not probe Francesca's meaning farther, yet to him mystery, save of his own making, was fraught with danger.

At last he took a desperate resolve.

"Harken, Francesca," he said, firmly. "I have as much trust in you as I could bring myself to feel for any human being, and I expect from you some return for my confidence and the rewards I have promised you. But if I do not attempt to dive into your exact meaning I may at least demand thus much from you before I forgive this daring action on your part: During what part of Miss Vyvian's residence on the Continent did you know her? and were you in her father's service? I had some very slight acquaintance with them, and I cannot remember ever seeing you or hearing your name."

"It was some eighteen or more years since," returned the woman, "when she was a mere child; and you would be scarcely more than a first boyhood, Mr. Villiers. It is scarcely likely that you would either of you have a very clear remembrance of me at that age."

"More especially since I had never even heard of the young lady or her father till some years after," exclaimed Villiers, with an irrepressible sigh of relief, and a change of countenance that betrayed some sudden and deep satisfaction. "But even now I cannot understand what object you can have in sounding the secrets—if there are any—of one you only knew as a child."

"Nay, you promised to leave that unexplained," returned the woman, "and, so far as I know, the reasons are perfectly distinct from you, Mr. Villiers; and without any importance to your safety or your peace. I am certain—positive," she added, "that they relate to matters you could never suspect in the remotest degree, and with which you have nothing whatever to do."

It was impossible to doubt her sincerity, whether she might be mistaken or not, and Eustace was fain to forbear, at any rate for the moment.

"Well, I shall follow Mrs. Villiers and escort her back," he said, carelessly, "and as I shall not leave her again for some time this one lapse of yours need not be of any importance. Get some refreshment ready," he said. "We shall be back in an hour or so, I do not doubt."

He quitted the room without waiting for a single word, and in a few moments more the chaise and its spirited postboys were again whirling along the road.

"Let me see, my good fellow," he said, leaning from the window as they approached the gates of the Rookery, "I almost forget the name of the steward—I mean Miss Vyvian's steward. In his mistress's absence I must try and do my business with him, if possible."

"Jenkins, sir," was the reply. "He's been there for years, so there's no mistake."

"Ah, you're an intelligent fellow, not likely to make mistakes," said Eustace, courteously, and a dolo, astonishing to postboy comprehension, found its way into the hard hand of the Jehu. "You can ask for him when we arrive, and say I only want a few minutes' talk with him."

The tenant of such an equipage, with the additional prestige of Tim's evident deference, was soon ushered to the dining-room, where Jenkins, after a brief delay, joined him.

"I can only introduce myself as an old friend of Miss Vyvian, your mistress," said Eustace, blandly. "I have been extremely grieved to hear of her severe illness, and I came to learn more accurate tidings of her than those of mere report."

"Indeed, sir. Then you have arrived at the best possible time," observed Jenkins. "for Mr. Mordant, her betrothed husband, has not long come from London, to make arrangements for her protracted absence from the Rookery. He says she is better. Would you like to see him, sir?" added the man.

"Well, no—not yet," returned Eustace, a dark shade gathering over his face. "You are much more able to give me the information I want, Mr. Jenkins; or if you should not be inclined to enter on the subject I am sure I can rely on your discretion not to let any idle gossip or rumours get afloat as to my anxiety to learn the truth."

Jenkins scanned him closely.

"Why, I don't think you look like any one who would do a shabby trick, sir," he said, significantly. "I am always ready and willing to oblige a gentleman, especially when he behaves like one, and I think it is very likely I can know as much as most persons about my young lady and her family arrangements."

"Exactly so; and the information will be rated at its full value, my friend," returned Eustace, significantly touching his pocket. "But it may occupy some time in the discussion, and I had better take another opportunity of entering on the subject—more especially as my wife, Mrs. Villiers, is, I fancy, waiting for me in one of the saloons. Suppose we fix a more safe and convenient place for the interview. What think you of the lady's bower, at the top of the garden, about seven o'clock in the morning, Mr. Jenkins? We shall be undisturbed there."

The steward smiled a respectful assent and then courteously ushered his visitor to the spot from which opened the large windows of the apartment where his entrance had created such alarm.

(To be continued.)

THE YOUNG LOCKSMITH.

CHAPTER XIX.

PROMPT at the call, the young locksmith settled to his work. Katrin and the girls were close by him, the judges were all present, jolly Captain Blount was near at hand, old Boisey was there, more deeply concerned than ever in the enterprise; while the hall was filled to repletion with the former interested lookers-on and others who had seen or heard of what was transpiring.

Ned removed his coat, and took hold of his job in his shirt-sleeves; his friends, Powers & Small, came to his side as he commenced his attack upon their safe, fastened with one of Jones's best improved locks.

"How do you feel, Corson?" they asked.

"All right, gentlemen. There are five hundred pounds inside of this safe. Captain Blount lent me that sum to place against this amount in the other, that Mr. Jones pecked away at all day yesterday—and which is secured with my new lock. I have undertaken to return Mr. Blount his money to-day. The bank closes its business at four. Before that hour I shall place Mr. Blount's five hundred pounds in his hands—in time to re-deposit it—and earn the other five hundred for myself!"

He commenced his work at nine.

At a quarter to twelve o'clock Ned Corson had demolished Jones's famous invention, and took from the safe, triumphantly, the coveted five hundred pounds—amid the ringing cheers of the crowded audience.

"You've done it, young man," said Jones, very frankly. "You've beaten me. Well, we can't win every time."

And he cordially took the locksmith's apprentice by the hand as Ned simply remarked:

"Thank you, Mr. Jones. Your lock is an excellent one. This is the result of my first lesson, sir."

"Brave boy!" shouted old Blount. "They can't beat Ned Corson easy on locks, I think!"

The inventor of the "Burglar-proof Safe-lock" had won the battle, and he did it handsomely in three short hours.

But he was very modest and quiet in the midst of the flattering encomiums that were there and elsewhere showered on him by those who had witnessed or knew the circumstances of this well-earned victory.

"If I was in the habit o' drinkin', Ned," said old Blount, exultingly, at the close of the contest, "I should perhaps over-step the mark arter this. But I ain't, as you know. I gave that up years ago, and am all the better for it, o' course. But this is a triumph to be sure, my boy."

"I knew what I was about, captain," replied Ned, "from the outset."

"And you have done your work very well," chimed in Miss Katrin, coming up as the crowd settled away.

The announcement of young Corson's triumph

quickly got into the papers, and once more he was the lion of the day.

When the decision of the judges was published a few days afterward the following appeared in the catalogue of prizes awarded:

"To EDWARD CORSON, Inventor and Patentee of 'Corson's Burglar-proof Bank and Safe-lock.' First Premium in Class VI., the Society's Gold Medal for the best lock exhibited."

This award, and the five hundred pounds he received in ready cash, rather set our hero up, as may well be supposed, and he accepted the congratulations of his friends on all sides with grateful acknowledgments.

From that day forward our hero had his hands full. He went to work at once to manufacture his locks, and had all the business he could well attend to.

Meanwhile Mr. Holland had reached Scotland, and at once proceeded to put in Ned Corson's claim to his father's estate.

Several weeks elapsed before anything definite was heard by Holland, but it was at length decided that Edward Corson, locksmith and inventor, was "the son of his father!"

That that father was dead, that he left no other heir, and if he had, this son being the next legal successor to deceased—there being no other children—that the nice landed property in Strathavan, lately belonging to Edward Corson, yeoman, aforesaid, fell by right to the young man represented by John Holland, Esq., attorney, was evident; and the lawyer was placed in a position to begin to take possession, duly, in Ned's behalf.

The tenants were officially notified of the lawful accession of the new proprietor, and the farm was advertised to be sold.

The estate was a very good though not a large one.

The adjoining proprietor had long been desirous to get hold of this farm, to add to his own generous acres, but the authorities could not sell it.

There was considerable competition at the public sale, but the owner of the next estate to it purchased the Corson place—being the highest bidder—for fifteen thousand four hundred pounds.

The income from the estate, which had been collected for nearly twenty years by county authority, averaged about two hundred and forty pounds annually.

This had accumulated to nearly five thousand pounds more, which lay to the heir's credit in the coffers of the bank.

In round numbers, Mr. Holland received in all, as the proceeds of the estate and past rental, twenty thousand pounds, and started again in very good spirits.

Mr. John Holland, attorney, dropped in at the mansion upon Ned, Katrin, and Captain Blount on the day Katrin was twenty years old, all the way from Scotland, where he was received upon this happy occasion with the consideration due to so welcome a friend and messenger.

Letters had come from him from time to time during his absence, informing the lucky apprentice of the progress he was making, and his safe arrival in the little village at last, together with the announcement of the result of his journey was the occasion of a new sensation there.

As soon as the handshaking of the friends was over Mr. Holland briefly recounted what he had accomplished, and handed the triplicate draft to his employer, who received the handsome amount with becoming thanks and due acknowledgments.

"Now, my boy," said old Blount, gaily, "I give you joy on this accession to your property! You've got more than I have earned and laid by in thirty long years of toil and hardship on the rugged old sea. This, in addition to your patent burglar-proof lock, makes you a rich man, and will make us all happy indeed upon Katty's birthday, which we celebrate to-day."

Katrin's eyes glistened at sight of the clean, bright document Ned held in his hand, and, though she was very glad thus to know that her handsome lover was so fortunate, she secretly wished that she had been wealthy, too, that she might have been more worthy of him, instead of being as she was—so very poor in purse.

While thus pondering Ned took up Mr. Blount's pen, and wrote upon the back of the draft, in Mr. Holland's presence, the following words, to the astonishment of that legal gentleman and the uproarious delight of the jolly captain:

"Pay within-named sum to the order of Miss Katrin Delorme, EDWARD CORSON."

"There, Katty," said the generous-hearted lover, handing her the draft. "Accept this from the poor locksmith's apprentice as a birth-day gift. You are twenty years old to-day, as nearly as any of us know; and this is just one thousand pounds sterling each for

every year you have so far passed in this not always lucky world."

There were no dry eyes in that little crowd for the next five minutes.

Katty couldn't speak.

"But, Ned," she exclaimed, at length, recovering herself; "what shall I do with the twenty thousand pounds?"

"Do what you like with it, darling. I don't want it. I am coining money every day with my safe-lock. If it hadn't been for you and the old chest, you remember, perhaps I should never have wrought out my invention to the splendid success I have achieved. I shall stick to the lock trade, Katty. This is yours in your own right. Our mutual friend here, Captain Blount, will go to town with you, and identify you at the banking-house of Stiggins & Co., and you can draw the money. Then you and he can dispose of it to your liking. Take the captain's advice. He won't recommend any course that isn't right."

The ancient mariner was in ecstasies.

"A hero to the last!" he exclaimed. "Didn't I always say so, Katty?"

On the following morning Ned handed Mr. Holland a cheque for two thousand pounds upon his own bankers, for he had accumulated nearly twice that sum during the past year of his prosperous business and took from the late "Attorney for the heir of the Corson estate in Scotland" a receipt in full of all demands.

The gallant Captain Blount proceeded to Stiggins & Co., with whom he was well acquainted, where he introduced Miss Katrin Delorme, the holder of the draft upon that house for twenty thousand pounds.

The bill was promptly paid, and the friends went away rejoicing, returning once more to the village.

CHAPTER XX.

CAPTAIN BLOUNT invested Katrin's money in good mortgages.

This event soon got wind, and the generosity of the late indigent apprentice was again the talk of the town. The "charity-boy" had made the poor wail of the lighthouse a lady of wealth.

The fair girl was rich in mental attributes, too, and as she grew older her natural charms of beauty ripened and developed, until she became a very elegant young woman whom everybody loved who had the honour to know her.

"It is very well, Noddy, that I should possess this handsome fortune, since you will have it thus," suggested Katrin, "but I can't help thinking that if I had fallen into such a 'nice plum,' as good Captain Blount calls it, through my own family relatives, or friends—whoever they may be—that I should have more earnestly enjoyed the privilege of placing such an amount in your hands rather than that I should be the beneficiary at your cost."

"It is just as well, darling—why not?—as it is," Ned would say. "There's enough for you, and, in any contingency, you are now provided for. I have got my trade and my patent to fall back upon. I am doing finely with it, and have made a handsome sum already. The money I've got I've worked for, Katty. That's the way to get it, and learn how to value it afterward."

"I know that, and I always commended you for this disposition of yours, Ned."

"Yes, Katty. Labour is honourable always. Toil, brains, and steady application together, will insure success. I have got a good show for more money than you've got—in the next three years—from my invention. Don't talk about your poverty, then. Why, you're the richest young girl in town now! And a capital catch you'd make for some one of the young gentlemen around us, if—"

"I were not already caught, Neddy, by the handsomest, the best, and the truest of them all!"

"Well, well, I never think of that nice fortune left me, Katty, scarcely."

"You are so constantly absorbed in your profession, Ned."

"Yes. But you see, Katty, I never even had it at all. I passed that paper representing it over to you at once when it came; and so I did not miss it. Enjoy it, then. And don't murmur about what you might have had from your own family or friends. Possibly they may turn up some day; and you may be an heiress, or a marchioness, or a Lady Something—eh? Why not? Stranger things have happened; and surely you nor I, nor anybody else ever dreamed that the poor workhouse lad, old Boisey's blundering apprentice, would ever blunder into any twenty thousand pounds, until the event actually occurred."

"No, indeed, that's true enough, Ned."

"And the discovery I made, too, with the old teakwood chest lock. That was accidental. I don't know but I might have worked out my original plan for a prime safe-lock without that. But certain I am, when I examined that curious piece of mechanism, ideas poured into my brain, as I studied the chest lock, which I never conceived before. And to that

lucky circumstance, between ourselves, Katrin. I attribute in a great measure my subsequent success with the invention."

"I often think of that circumstance, Neddy. As for the old chest, though, I haven't seen that for months."

"Where is it, Katrin?"

"Oh, safe enough—stored away in my room, upstairs. But I have no use for it now, and so have no occasion to look after it."

"Well, take good care of it, Katrin. I want to examine that lock again some day; and the chest is intrinsically valuable too, though it is not a very comely piece of furniture, I admit."

"I know that, Ned. It is a sample of rare good workmanship though, and as strong almost as iron."

"Some night, Katrin, dear, we'll overhaul it again. You remember the old days at the lighthouse cottage, where we used to sit together, two hapless, hopeless children, and talk over what we might possibly some day be?"

"Ah, yes. Those were happy days, indeed. When we were so innocent too of the real affection we entertained for each other, and grew up loving and loved."

"Ay, Katrin dear. The old brown chest stood in the corner by the fireplace—I can see it now—as we talked over its possible history, and of whence it came, who owned it, and what it contained when you and it fell into Mr. Blount's hands."

"Yes, Ned. And how we used to jest about the clumsy trunk, and wonder what such a thing could ever have been made for!"

"And yet it contained your whole fortune, Katrin, when you were rescued at the sea-shore."

"Yes; and a poor show indeed that fortune was, to be sure! My own, and my probable mother's wearing apparel, with a few trifles else, were found within it, and these were soiled and stained, from exposure in the salt-water, before the chest floated to the beach."

"Yes; I recollect your history, as old Mr. Blount used to relate it. Well, I have heard from my progenitors," said Ned, "and possibly you will hear of yours one of these days. I at least hope so, Katrin."

He kissed her fondly, and they separated.

"We'll have another look at the old chest one of these nights," he said, "I want to see that queer fancy lock again, Katrin."

"Always harping upon locks!" she replied, as Captain Blount came in, at the close of this conversation.

"I'm going up to town to-morrow," said the captain. "Will you join me, Katrin? The girls can't go, and I don't care to ride alone. Ned will go up with us too—eh, my boy?"

"Yes; thanks, I intended to go by coach; but if you drive up, I'll go with you."

"It will be much pleasanter."

Thus it was arranged.

Old Blount did not go to London, nowadays, as often as he used to do. He was getting somewhat infirm again, and his hearing was not good latterly.

"They've got a new railroad laid down," said Blount, "and the track crosses the road several times on our way to town. I don't like those trains, and those tearin' engines, no way. The horses get scared at 'em, too."

"You must 'look out for the engine,' you know," said Ned.

"Oh, I can read the signs o' course. I ain't blind yet, my boy—though I'm a little deaf at times. However, we can't have all the blessings o' youth for ever. The old hull gives out, by degrees, and poofy soon it'll be knocked out o' j'int by the life-shocks we all experience, more or less—and old Joe Blount, jolly craft, that he's sailed for sixty-odd year, in all weathers, afore and ag'inst the wind, will be laid in the 'dry-dock,' that we must all find rest in at last—sooner or later!"

Poor old Blount! Jovial, kind-hearted, brave, honest, generous old sea-dog.

Little he thought at that moment how soon his craft would be a hapless wreck.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE visit to London proved a very agreeable one to Katrin. She made several purchases at the shops, for she was getting ready slowly for an important event that would come off at the Blount mansion in the course of a few months, the time of her marriage with the young locksmith having been fixed.

Ned's business had prospered wonderfully. The firm of Powers & Small had adopted his lock in preference to all others for their safes, and they were extensive manufacturers, requiring a large number during the year.

The fame of Corson's Premium Burglar-proof Lock had spread far and wide. The patentee had orders for them in abundance from all parts of the

country, and his lock-factory was a busy place indeed.

Old Boissey often visited him nowadays.

"I don't blame you, Ned, for not acceptin' my offer o' ten shillings a day for your services as foreman o' my shop—now I see what you had to turn to," he said to his former apprentice, pleasantly, one day. "But it was a good offer ne'ertheless."

"So it was, sir—but I could do better."

"Yes, I see; better'n I ever expected you to do, a long way. However, you was a good boy, gin'ally speakin', an' I'm glad you hit it as you did. When did you make your first lock, now, Ned?" asked Boissey.

"I was occupied with it first and last, sir, three years, I think."

"Afore you was free, then, o' course?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so, Ned."

"But I worked on it in my own time, not in yours, Mr. Boissey."

"Wasn't your time mine till you was twenty-one? Didn't I feed, an' clothe, an' house you, Ned, as I agreed to?"

"Yes, you did; but I worked nights and holidays only on my invention till I completed it. That's why it took me so long to finish the job."

"Well, if that's so," muttered Boissey.

"It was so, sir, certainly."

"Then I've nothin' to say, Ned, on'y this: I larnt you all you ever larnt of anybody. I give you a good trade. You can thank old Luke Boissey for what you've got, that's all."

"In a great measure you are right, sir," responded Ned, who respected the old locksmith, notwithstanding his weaknesses—and never turned upon him.

"And you're richer than Oresus, besides, I hear, Ned—in money from your father's estate?"

"He left me twenty thousand pounds, Mr. Boissey," replied Ned, indifferently.

"What?" exclaimed his old master.

"But I haven't got a shilling of it now."

"Why, what on airth have you done with the money so soon? I hope you ain't been a spec'latin', Ned?"

"No, sir."

"Where's the money gone to, then?"

"I gave it away, sir."

"Give it away? To whom?"

"Miss Katrin Delorme."

"Oh—ah! Yes. That's all right. I see. All in the family, like. Yes. Well—Ned—you're goin' to marry the girl, I s'pose—eh?"

"One of these days. Yes, sir."

"Well, you can't do this too soon now. I married young myself, Ned. And Miss Katrin's a nice young lady. I've known her, now—well, a matter o' seventeen or eighteen years. I mind me o' the dreadful storm we had, just afore she floated ashore, in a stove boat, when old Blount, the lighthouse-keeper, found her, a baby."

"Did you ever hear much about her, sir, or her family?"

"No. Nothing, only what Blount used to tell. No. I don't know nothin' of her family, Ned. But what does that signify? She's as poor as Job—'ceptin' what you've give her; but she's a very nice body herself, an' she'll make you a good wife, I've no manner o' doubt."

"I trust so, sir—and we shall soon be married now."

"When, Ned? I must go to the weddin'."

"Of course, sir. And your wife, too, Mrs. Boissey. How is she, sir?"

"Well, she's gettin' shaky, is your old missus. She never was none o' the heartiest, though she hangs on yet," sighed Boissey, as if it would be a comfort should Mrs. Boissey hang off, as soon as convenient and agreeable to that excellent woman!

Boissey was himself doing well in his locksmithery, and had laid up money since he came to London. He never offered, however, to refund old Blount the hundred pounds the captain advanced him for Ned's benefit.

"For," he would say, when he occasionally recollected this favour, "wasn't it done for the boy's advancement? Wasn't he my apprentice? Wasn't his'n mine? An' didn't I feed, an' lodge an' clothe him? Of course I did—Blount knows this."

Blount knew also that it would be easier to get a stamp speech out of a dead man than it would be to get his loan of a hundred pounds back again from Luke Boissey. And so he never asked the eccentric locksmith to return or account for it.

Ned spent the greater part of his time up at London—going down to the village on Saturdays, and passing the Sundays with Katrin at Captain Blount's house.

One night, after tea, he alluded to the old teak-wood chest again.

"It is emptied, Ned, and ready for you any time you'll have it brought downstairs," said Katrin. "It's a heavy thing to handle, though, you'll find."

"What is that, Katrin?" inquired Mr. Blount.

"The old chest in my room, sir. Ned wants to poke it over again and see the lock he says."

"I've long thought I should like to see the inside o' that old box too," rejoined the captain. "So let's have it down to-night, and take a look at it. What do you say, my boy? Tired—eh?"

"No, sir. I want to look at it myself, and am quite fresh, and at your service. It is a curious affair, as you may have heard me say before. I got one or two good ideas from the lock upon it some years ago. But, otherwise, in its internal arrangements it is very singularly contrived."

"It's a musty-lookin' subject any way, as I remember it while it was in my brother's keeping," suggested the captain.

"Oh, it's of no account save from its peculiar associations," said Katrin.

"Well, come, Ned, and we will bring it down from Katrin's room."

And away went Blount and Ned upstairs.

They soon returned, tugging along into the great sitting-room, which was well lighted, with the old, teak-wood chest, which, indeed, proved a "lift" for the two men.

"If that trunk were filled with gold, I doubt if it would feel heavier to handle than it now does!" said Ned, dropping his end of it to the floor, while portly old Captain Blount puffed like a porpoise after his exertion in aiding Ned to get it down into the sitting-room.

"It is heavy, I know," said Katrin, laughing. "The stage-coach men used to allude to me, going to and coming from school with it, as 'the purty young ooman with the big-ice-chest.' And all the girls called it the woodshed belonging to the old lighthouse. But I never minded their jokes. It has done me more than one good turn, and maybe it will another. We can't judge of a good cat merely from the colour of her skin, you know, captain."

"That's true, my girl. But bear a hand now, Ned. Turn up the old hulk. Why don't you lift? You'd make a stunner abo'd ship at haulin' 'taut the braces, I reckon!"

"When I have to haul 'em you'll see," said Ned.

The chest was turned about to the light, and Ned, Blount, Katrin, and the captain's two daughters got around to examine it.

(To be continued.)

LADY CHETWYND'S SPECTRE.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE announcement of old Raguee's instinctive conviction that Lady Chetwynd lived, and that it was herself and not her spectre that Sylvia Monk had seen, was delivered with a startling vehemence that for an instant almost carried conviction also to Sylvia's heart.

"Alive! Bernice alive!" she whispered, hollowly. "Impossible."

"Not impossible, missy, if Gilbert Monk should have circumvented our plans," said old Raguee, nodding her turbaned head, her witch-like features working convulsively. "I did not suspect him of being so deep, but depend upon it he was hid in these rooms upon that day so long ago when we planned Lady Chetwynd's death, and he changed the globules, and has now in his keeping the globules you should have given young Lady Chetwynd."

"I don't believe it," said Miss Monk, with sudden vehemence. "I tell you it is not so. I would rather believe that I saw a ghost to-night than that I saw the living Bernice Chetwynd. I can prove to my own satisfaction that it was not Bernice. If it were the true Lady Chetwynd in the body, where has she been all these fifteen months since her burial?"

"Gilbert might have kept her out of sight, for purposes of his own."

"If it had been Lady Chetwynd in the flesh," demanded Sylvia Monk, "why did she not speak? Why did she not rush into the room and throw herself in her husband's arms?"

The old East Indian woman shook her head. The question was to her also unanswerable.

"Ah, you cannot answer?" she exclaimed, with a thrill of jubilation in her silvery tones. "I thought not. And Gilbert was too unmoved and quiet to have suffered recent alarm. He did not see the vision, or spectre. I am persuaded of that, whatever I may have thought earlier. Had Bernice been living, and had she escaped from some place in which he had put her, Gilbert would have been eager and restless and half wild to recapture her, while Bernice would have flown to her husband's arms. No."

no. I repeat, Gilbert did not see the spectre, and it was a spectre."

Old Rague evidently began to waver in her belief. As Sylvia marked the wavering, her joy increased. "You have made a mistake in counting, or there were not originally a hundred globules in each vial," declared Sylvia, positively. "We will be watchful of Gilbert, but I am persuaded that I saw a spectre to-night. Why should Bernice come back after all these months from the other world? Chetwynd saw her first, so that she did not come to haunt me. There was no anger in her face, only a great grief. Well, let her grieve if she chooses," Miss Monk added, lightly; "I can afford to rejoice. I am again engaged to marry Lord Chetwynd. I shall hurry on the marriage. I shall write to town to-morrow to my dressmaker, and I shall go up next week to purchase my trousseau. The bills can be sent in after my marriage, unless Chetwynd gives me carte blanche for my preparations, which he will do. He is generosity itself, as he can afford to be with his immense and princely income. Ah, Rague, I shall live here like a queen. The town house shall be opened; the villa at Brighton shall be refurnished; and we shall make changes here at the Park. We will spend the next winter at Chetwynd's villa at Mentone. Ah, what a life I shall lead—full of gaiety and splendour! I stand at last upon the eve of the fulfilment of all my hopes and schemes."

While Sylvia Monk was thus lulling herself into a false security, and while old Rague was determining to probe the mystery that was so fraught with danger to her idolized young mistress, the lord of Chetwynd was in his wife's room, a prey to the keenest agitation and distress.

"Neither Gilbert nor Sylvia saw Bernice to-night," he muttered, striding to and fro. "It must have been an optical illusion. I can understand how it all happened. I had been thinking of Bernice every moment since my return. I had fancied that she seemed near me. And when I offered poor Sylvia the only reparation I can make her for all she has suffered at the tongues of the gossips, and all she has suffered through her love for me, I thought even then of my lost Bernice. And when Sylvia laid her head upon my bosom and I kissed her, an awful thrill went through me, as if I were wronging my lost young wife. What wonder then that, shrinking back from Sylvia's caress as if I had no right to receive it, I fancied that I saw Bernice standing in the doorway? The illusion was natural. I cannot wonder at it."

He walked for hours in the long-closed rooms until the fires burned low. Then, with his strange anxiety and restlessness still upon him, he retired to Bernice's bed-chamber. He knelt down by the bedside and sobbed aloud.

For a long time he knelt there, and gradually he grew calm with the calmness of his old despair.

He lay with closed eyes, a travelling rug drawn over him. He was tired and worn, and gradually a sense of sleepiness stole over him, and he dozed uneasily.

He was aroused suddenly with the swiftness of thought by a soft touch on the forehead. He did not open his eyes, and the touch descended again as softly as a snow flake falls upon his mustached lips. The touch was slightly chill, but it was like a silent fluttering kiss.

He stirred—he opened his eyes.

And then again he saw the vision that he had seen hours before in the lower rooms. He beheld Bernice—Bernice in the development of a magnificent and splendid beauty, with the tender, innocent eyes he had loved, with the sensitive mouth, with the lithe, light, graceful figure, and wearing still the white robes in which she had been buried. He lay still, scarcely daring to breathe.

She had glided from him to the distance of a few feet, and was regarding him with an ineffable love and anguish. She opened her mouth as if to speak, but no words came. She spread wide her bared arms, as if to enfold him.

"Bernice!" cried out the young lord, in a sharp, shrill voice. "Bernice! speak to me!"

She shook her head sorrowfully, and retreated toward the dressing-room.

With a startling cry he sprang up from his couch and bounded toward her.

She continued her swift retreat, looking backward at him over her shoulder with that radiant face of love and sorrow, and disappeared in the dressing-room. The door closed behind her. Chetwynd dashed it open, but the vision had gone.

He explored the bath-room adjoining; he ran out into the great hall, the door leading into which from the bath-room being unlocked; he searched the great empty guest-chambers; but he found no trace of his strange visitant.

He knocked at Gilbert Monk's door, but there came no response. The door was unlocked, and he entered the room.

A light and a fire were burning, but Monk was not there.

Considerably puzzled at Monk's absence from his room an hour past midnight, the marquise returned to the hall.

He went into his rooms, closed his doors, and walked the floors all the long night, and watched and listened and waited. But the spectre did not come again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GILBERT MONK, after leaving his sister in the drawing-room, had hurried out of doors, as we have said, in search of Bernice.

The one great idea that possessed him was to find her. He comprehended that he was on the brink of exposure; that an accident might reveal to Lord Chetwynd that his spectral visitant was a being of flesh and blood—and he knew also that his safety lay in prompt and energetic measures.

Upon his course of action upon this night depended his fate.

He searched the lawn, the shrubbery, the rocks overhanging the sea, the strip of beach, the boat and bath houses, and penetrated far into the park, peeping into nooks and glades, and sewerts, but he did not find her.

He hurried in and out among the thick shadows of the trees for hours, and at last the conviction came to him that she had in some way eluded him.

"She'll come again," he thought. "She's like an unaged leopardess since she saw her husband. I'll wait here for her."

He left his door unlocked that she might enter silently, and flung himself into an easy-chair in an obscure corner, and waited for her appearance.

But the time wore on and she did not come. The great clock in the stable tower struck the hour of twelve, and a silence like death reigned throughout the stately mansion, but still Bernice did not come.

Monk waited until a great fear came to him that Bernice might have entered her old rooms—might have seen her husband there—and, carried away by the supreme ecstacy of the moment and her joy at seeing him, might have permitted him to clasp her in his arms.

A cold perspiration came to Monk's visage. He pulled off his boots and put on a pair of cork-soled slippers, and then stole out again into the hall.

He crept to the various doors opening into the hall from Lord Chetwynd's suite of private rooms. No sound came from the boudoir or dressing-room. He was certain that Chetwynd was in the bed-chamber.

He listened at the door. The sound of gentle and regular breathing became at last perceptible. Chetwynd was within—asleep. Bernice was not there. Yet he waited, watching, listening.

Presently the door of the bath-room opened suddenly, and a slender, white-robed figure stole swiftly into the hall as if pursued, and glided like a beam of light along the hall to the rear intersecting corridor.

It was Bernice!

Monk flew after her in his list slippers as silently as she. She ran fleetly down the long hall and turned aside into the corridor, Monk behind her.

They had scarcely passed beyond the great hall when Lord Chetwynd opened the door of the bath-room and came out in wild pursuit.

But Bernice and Monk were both beyond the range of his vision. The seeming spectre was flying along the dim corridor toward an unused portion of the extensive mansion, not stopping or looking back.

She gained another hall from which a flight of stairs ascended, and went up the steps with still rapidity.

Monk came swiftly a little way behind her. She must have been conscious of the pursuit, but still she did not cast a backward look over her shoulder. Up one flight, then another, and Bernice had gained a region of unused attics in the more ancient portion of the dwelling.

She ran across the dim passage into a little bare and empty room, lit up by the moonlight that streamed in at the dormer windows. She had run into a trap, and seemed to realize the fact, for she ran about the room wildly in circles once or twice, and then retreated to a farther corner, uttering a low strange cry, and covering her face with her hands.

Monk entered the room and closed the door.

Bernice in her moonlit corner panted and trembled, and remained with covered face. Monk pushed the bolt home in its socket, and approached her.

"Bernice!" he said, softly.

The girl started with a ringing cry, and looked up at him with distended eyes.

"Gilbert!" she ejaculated. "I—I thought it was Roy."

"No, it is I. I heard from Mrs. Crowl that you

had strangely disappeared from Mawr Castle, and I knew you would come here. I arrived myself only to-night."

"With Roy? Oh, how he is changed, Gilbert! My poor darling! How grave and stern he has grown! And how his soul leaped out at me from his eyes! He is looking for me now. Hark! Is he coming this way?"

"No, Bernice. These rooms have not been used for years. He will not find you."

"I must go to him," cried the girl, in her sweet, impetuous voice. "Now—now—this minute! I knew you were at the Park, and I went to your old room, Gilbert, but you were not there. Release me from my oath. I must go to my husband."

"Bernice, listen to me. I have something to say to you first."

"Not a word. Why, he's looking for me now. He thinks me a ghost. Release me from my oath. I must go to him. Is he calling? Let me go, Gilbert. In Heaven's name let me go to my husband!"

"Not yet, Bernice—not until you listen to what I have to say," said Monk, firmly. "Chetwynd thinks you are a spectre, as you say. He will go back to his room presently. There's time enough—but you must listen to me."

"Then speak quickly. How can I wait? He thinks me dead—he wants me."

"How do you know that he wants you?" asked Monk, in crisp, hard tones.

"How do I know? Why, because I want him. Oh, I love him so; I must go to him. Release me from my oath, Gilbert."

"Hear me first. Bernice, I have thought you the bravest, the noblest, the most generous of women, but you are selfish like the rest. You are not capable of self-sacrifice."

"What self-sacrifice?" asked the girl, in a sharp whisper.

"Are you capable of a sublime self-abnegation?" demanded Monk, his black eyes all aflame. "Can you immolate self on the altar of your husband's happiness? I have thought that there was in you the stuff of which martyrs are made, but, bah! you are like all the rest, regardless only of your own petty love. And yet there have been women who have sacrificed themselves for their husbands."

"Gilbert, what do you mean?" cried Bernice, her voice ringing sharply on the air.

"What was your last act before falling into the trance in which you were consigned to your tomb?" asked Monk, in a stern voice. "Your last words were to beg Chetwynd, after a suitable season of mourning for you, to marry Sylvia Monk," declared Gilbert, in a passionless voice. "Your last act before your seeming death was to reunite those two who had been so terribly parted. You seemed to realize that they were all the world to each other, and that Chetwynd's marriage to you had been a mere impulse on his part."

"Oh, no, no," wailed the girl, shuddering. "He loved me once, Gilbert; he did love me."

"You think so? Well, hear me. Chetwynd and Sylvia Monk were betrothed at the death-bed of my step-mother, Roy's own mother. They loved each other with a wild and passionate affection," said the scheming villain, glibly. "They were both proud, both wilful. What followed? A quarrel, of course. Lovers always quarrel. Chetwynd went away in his yacht 'Sylvia'—named in honour of his betrothed—and strayed away into the northern seas. He went to Norway, and finally appeared at St. Kilda. You know what followed. Stung with anger at his treatment by Sylvia, and longing madly to inflict some terrible pain upon her, he married you."

"No, no. He loved me."

"You still think so? How women cling to the last to a belief in their power to win men! And you believe that Lord Chetwynd, used to the society of the best cultivated women in England—y you think that he fell in love at first sight with a simple bred young island girl of St. Kilda? The vanity of women is something appalling! You think I am stern and hard, Bernice, but I am only just. My heart is divided between pity for them and you. They loved each other in Romeo and Juliet fashion—they could die for love! When Chetwynd came home with you he realized what he had done. He loved Sylvia, and he was married to you! He is a noble fellow, and he would never have suffered you to know the truth. One night he told Sylvia in the pink boudoir that he loved her more than ever, and that he wished that he were dead."

Bernice gasped for breath.

She recalled the night in which she had seen, in the pink boudoir, Sylvia Monk in Chetwynd's arms. A conviction that Monk was speaking the truth forced itself upon her reluctant mind.

Monk noted the impression he was making and resumed:

"In short, Bernice, they love each other. You gave them back to each other. After consigning

you to the burial vault Chetwynd returned home and had a private interview with Sylvia. In that interview all was made straight between them. Chetwynd thought it best to spend the year of his mourning abroad, and he went. He would not expose his future wife to malicious comment. He returned to-day. This very evening Chetwynd and Sylvia renewed their former engagement. Chetwynd adores her. He is anxious to hurry the marriage. He is all joy, rapture, hope, as lovers are wont to be. He believes that he saw your spectre to-night. Great Heaven! what will be his despair if you reveal the fact to him that you live?

Bernice stood like a statue. She remembered that she had heard Chetwynd call Sylvia "my promised wife" only a few hours since; she remembered that Sylvia had been in Chetwynd's arms, her head buried in his breast, his kisses on her face.

Bernice moaned pitifully. Her grief was greater than she could bear.

Monk regarded her furtively, not certain as to her movements.

He went on, softly, sorrowfully:

"Oh, Bernice, it is all a hideous trouble. What can be done? It must be terrible to come back to life after a seeming death and find that one is not wanted—to find that one's place is filled, to find that the sharp edge of mourning has long since worn away, that the tender husband has forgotten the head that lay on his breast, the lips that pressed his, the voice that whispered love to him—has forgotten all these, and has wooed again his first and only love to be his wife! Ah, it must be terrible. Your day is passed—it is another's now? Your place is filled. You are not wanted here! The revelation that you live will only bring dismay and horror. Bernice, from my soul I pity you! My heart bleeds for you!"

The girl dropped silently on her knees in the wide stream of moonlight, and bowed her head low on her breast.

"There have been women," said Monk, after a long silence, "so self-abetting that upon such a return to life they would go away in silence without revealing the secret of their continued life. Are there such women now?"

There was a long and terrible pause.

Monk waited in breathless suspense for her response, but he had long to wait.

At last her low and broken voice out sharply through the stillness with the words:

"But I am his wife, you know. We said 'until death do us part,' and I'm not dead, Gilbert. His second marriage while I live would be illegal."

"Not so. Death annuls all ties. You seemed to die, and were buried. You are supposed to be dead. You are dead in the eyes of the law," said the villain, with an air of reluctant sincerity. "If you were to reappear, it is possible that your marriage ceremony might have to be performed again to make you Chetwynd's wife. I repeat that in the eyes of the law you are dead. Chetwynd's second marriage would be legal and valid."

The girl, brought up in a far island of the sea, knowing nothing about law, profoundly ignorant upon many points on which an English school-girl is well informed, having implicit reliance upon and faith in the man who had rescued her from the tomb, believed him! She was too guileless herself to believe that one could work her harm, and Monk had seemed her best friend. She had grown to love him with a sister's affection. She received his false words now, in her simple, unquestioning faith, as gospel.

"What can I do?" she whispered, in a dazed sort of way.

"You can reveal your presence here, and destroy the man you love, or you can go back to Mawr Castle with Flack—he's about the grounds; he brought me Mrs. Crowl's letter—and you can wait at the castle till I come, when we can decide upon your future. Which is it to be? Will you be a brave, heroic martyr, capable of the sublimest self-sacrifice a woman can make, or will you claim your own restoration to your lost rights, let what may happen?"

His words stung the despairing girl into a strange exaltation.

She raised her white, woeful face in the white sheen of the moonlight, and the seal of her self-abnegation was set upon it.

"I will go away," she said, in a voice so strange that Monk scarcely recognized it. "I am dead in the eyes of the law. It will be no crime for them to marry. I heard him call her his 'promised wife'; I saw him kiss her. They shall be happy. I love him so well that I will die even for his sake."

"My brave, glorious Bernice! You will give up your happiness for theirs?"

"For Roy's! I love him better than my life! Oh, Roy, my husband—mine no longer!" and the piteous voice broke into a wild wail, and the thin, beautiful hands were clasped together above the dusky head in an insupportable agony. "I give

him up. Could I be happy if he took me back wishing me still in my grave? He has gotten over my loss. He is resigned to my early death. He has gone back to his first love. And I—I have resigned him!"

"And you will go back to Mawr Castle?"

The girl nodded dumbly.

"I'll find Flack. He shall hire a carriage, and drive you to some station beyond Eastbourne. It would not be well for you to be seen even at Eastbourne. Flack will accompany you back to the castle. You have done a brave, grand and noble thing in giving up Roy, Bernice. I admire you for your sublime self-sacrifice. I will make your future my charge. I will be your brother, will watch over you, and try to make you happy. Wait here, Bernice, while I go to find Flack and send him for the carriage. I will return and see you safely out and on your way with him."

Bernice again nodded assent, and he went out, leaving her alone in the bare, cold room, in the pale stream of moonlight.

He made his way down to the edge of the park, and readily found Flack, who was smoking a pipe in the shadow of the trees. Monk communicated the fact of his success, and sent him ally to the little inn at Chetwynd-by-the-Sea for the required carriage. Having seen him depart, fully instructed, Monk stole back again into the house. All was still now in rooms and corridors. He crept along the dim passages, and ascended the stairs to the attic. He entered the little room in which he had left Bernice.

She was not there!

He stood as if transfixed.

What had happened? Had she been discovered? Had she repented her self-sacrifice?

His wild eye detected the gleam of paper on the floor in the broad sheen of the moonlight. He bounded toward it and picked it up. It was a leaf from Bernice's note-book, and there was writing on it. He struck a fusee and read the irregularly scrawled words. They had been written by Bernice, and were as follows:

"GILBERT.—I have given him up. I shall respect my oath not to reveal my identity; but I cannot leave him yet. One more look at his dear face—to hear his voice again—to see him sleeping—surely I may be permitted these without fear of wronging any one. Do not search for me. I may go back to Mawr Castle in time—not now. My only thought now is that he is here and I must be near him, myself unseen."

That was all. Monk sought for her through all the hours of that night. He listened at Chetwynd's door; he was in an agony of unrest and foreroding, for his search was vain. He did not find her!

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

A NEW ARTIFICIAL STONE.—A patent has been granted in the United States for a new artificial stone, produced by treating asbestos, either ground or in fibre, with silicate of potash or soda, then pressing the same into moulds of the desired form or shape, saturating the mass with chloride of calcium, either pure or mixed with chloride of magnesium, and finally washing it in pure water. The result is a compound claimed to be fire-proof and impervious to water, which can be used with great advantage for many different purposes. By preference, the bittern, or mother water, from salt works is used to saturate the blocks after they are pressed. The action of chloride of calcium and magnesium upon the alkaline silicate previously mixed with asbestos is to decompose the silicate, and form insoluble silicate of lime and magnesia, with soluble chlorides of potassium or sodium, the latter being readily removed by washing with water. The principal advantage claimed for the compound is that it preserves a certain degree of elasticity, mainly due to the fibrous nature of the asbestos, which cannot be attained if, in place of the asbestos, clay or other material of a similar character is employed.

A NEW RELATION BETWEEN HEAT AND ELECTRICITY.—The following facts concerning the relation between heat and electricity have been laid before the Royal Society by Mr. F. Guthrie. The discharging power of a hot body diminishes with its distance and increases with its temperature. But the discharging power of a hot body does not depend upon the quantity of heat radiated from it to the electrified body, but chiefly upon its quantity. Thus a white-hot platinum wire connected with the earth may exercise an indefinitely greater discharging power, at the same distance, than a large mass of iron at 100 d.g. C., though the latter may impart more heat to the electrified body. Neither the mere reception of heat, however intense, by the electrified body, unless the latter have such small capacity as to be itself intensely heated, discharges the electricity if the source of heat be distant; nor is discharge effected when the electrified body and a

neighbouring cold one are surrounded by air through which intense heat is passing. But, for the discharge, it is necessary that heat of intensity pass to the electrified body from a neutral body, within inductive range. As hot iron shows a preferential power of discharging negative over positive electricity, so it is found that white-hot but isolated iron refuses to be charged either with positive or negative electricity. As the iron cools it acquires first the power of receiving negative and afterwards of receiving positive electricity. Further, while white-hot iron in contact with an electrified body prevents that body from retaining a charge of either kind of electricity, as it cools it permits a positive charge to be received, and subsequently a negative one. White and red-hot metallic neutral bodies exercise this discharging power even when isolated from the earth, but always with less facility than when they are earth-connected. The hotter the discharging body, whether isolated or earth-connected, the more nearly alike do positive or negative electricities behave in being discharged; but at certain temperatures distinct differences are noticed. The negative electricity in all cases of difference is discharged with greater facility than the positive. It is shown that various flames, both earth-connected and isolated, have an exceedingly great power of discharging both kinds of electricity.

ARTIFICIAL CLOUDS.

The idea of creating artificial clouds to protect crops from the effects of frost is rather startling, but the severe losses entailed on vine growers in France by spring frosts have directed the attention of many scientific minds to the subject.

M. Gaston Bazile, of Montpellier, a well-known scientific agriculturist and chemist, and M. Le Vicomte de Laloyère, hit upon the expedient of creating clouds with the vapour of heavy hydrocarbons, and met with decided success.

When the sky is clear, and the temperature little above freezing point, and there is an absence of dew, clouds, and wind, there is great danger of frost, and when the frost comes in April or May the damage to the vineyards is enormous. In the Côte d'Or and the South of France the loss of half a crop of grapes by this frost, known as the effect of the *fine rosée*, from an old notion that the moon at a certain period burned up the young buds to redness, is not an uncommon occurrence; and last year, in a single night, the magnificent vines of Thomery, which bear the famous table grapes known as Chasselles de Fontainebleau, were so injured by frost that they will feel the effects for years.

The theory of the effect of clouds is that they intercept the radiation of the heat of the soil into space, and therefore prevent frost. The plan recommended is, when the danger threatens, to light a number of grease pots filled with oil of tar, or any other heavy oil, and placed all over the ground at the distance of fifteen yards from each other. Soon the heavy fumes will rise to a certain height, spread themselves over a large space, and hang there for three or four hours; sometimes it may be necessary to refill the pots. The cost is said not to amount to more than about eight shillings an acre, and the operation is not often necessary, twice or thrice a year at the utmost.

An experiment was made the other day at Suran, near Saint Cloud, in the presence of many of the members of the Agricultural Society of France and the farmers of the neighbourhood, and it was considered highly successful. A plot of about fifty acres was selected and three hectolitres (56 gallons) of heavy oil burnt; as soon as the pots were all lighted, columns of black smoke rose sluggishly over the surface, and formed themselves into heavy clouds. The wind was blowing pretty fresh, so the mass drifted towards Saint Cloud; but in calm weather, such as that when frosts threaten, the whole plot of land and a good deal more would have been protected for hours by the artificial clouds. The fruit growers present seemed much struck with the effect produced and with the explanation given by M. Barral, and some of them declared that they would try to save their peach and other blossoms from the scorching effects of the next *fine rosée*. The hint will not, we believe, be lost upon our own countrymen who are even more accustomed than our neighbours across the Channel to see their hopes of fruit nipped in the bud by mischievous spring frosts.

The Duke of Edinburgh will preside at the fifty-ninth Anniversary Festival of the Royal Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, City Road, to be held at the City Terminus Hotel, Cannon Street, on Monday, May 19th next.

The fine old three-decker "Duke of Wellington" flag ship at Portsmouth, is lying in the harbour dismantled. The masts of the "Bristol" are being got ready for her, and she will soon resume her wonted appearance, and serve to remind us of the navy of the past.



[ANNA CLAYTON'S APPEAL.]

THE UNSEEN SCHEMER.

"SIDNEY DALE, I love you. Our brief association together as teacher and pupil has drawn me to you by invisible chains, which I would not break, for I love to wear them. Sidney, you may not know the motive that prompted the letters you have received. For aught you know, the siren may sit on Scylla or Charybdis, and when it is too late you will raise the cry for help, and there will be none to save. Boy, remain where you are. I feel that you are rushing headlong into the schemer's net—I firmly believe that some one is playing for the gold, the property, which a kind father left you when he died. Stay at the college, boy; let me give these letters to the flames. As I love you, Sidney, stay with me."

This appeal did not fall without effect upon Sidney Dale's youthful heart, and a tear glistened in his bright blue eye as he stood before the professor and listened to his trembling voice.

"Mr. Gerwick," he said, "I honour you for the words which have just fallen from your lips, but I cannot wholly think as you do. I am not tired of your teaching, nor of my books, but this humdrum life is killing me."

"Another year, and you will be free, boy."

"True; but I must have action now. If I thought for a moment that those letters were written for my ruin, how gladly would I refuse their offers, and stay with you. But I am going—going to see the world."

"Then go, Sidney Dale," said the professor, with a stern air. "When you cling to Charybdis don't reproach me. I have tried to save you. I will say no more."

Sidney Dale did not reply, and a moment later the hands of teacher and pupil met in the grasp of farewell.

"Good-bye, Sidney," said the professor. "Take care of number one. Write me when you get to Dublin, and very often thereafter."

All this Sidney promised to do, then he left, perhaps never to return.

He would soon find himself master of many thousand pounds, and a man in years, if not in experience. He was an orphan; his father had left him wealth, which was in the hands of a guardian, and which he could not handle for one year.

He had been content at college until a letter reached him from Dublin.

It bore the impress of a woman's hand, and told the youth this: The writer's father had been Ralph Dale's friend, and he was about to make a tour through the most romantic portions of the Continent for health and pleasure. His only daughter, Therese, wished a companion during the trip, and his mind had reverted to the son of his friend. Would not Sidney Dale lay aside his books for one year, and travel over the Continent? Jerrold Harrison was rich, and he would defray the travelling expenses to have such an agreeable young man near his daughter.

Sidney Dale gave the proposition a favourable entertainment, and at once opened a correspondence with Mr. Harrison, through his child Therese.

Future letters decided our youth; he felt his heart drawn invisibly towards Therese Harrison, and, as the reader has seen, disregarding the words of the professor, he threw the books aside and started for Dublin.

The consent of his guardian had been easily obtained, and the youth felt himself free in every acceptance of the word when he trod the deck of the vessel which bore him towards his destination.

Strange fortunes awaited Sidney Dale.

"I wonder if the professor feels the affection for me he professes," murmured our hero as he stood by the mainmast. "He is capable of loving his fellow man, and I think he thought something of Sidney Dale. He spoke like a father, but, decided in my action, I would not listen. I can take care of myself, I—"

His thoughts were broken by a footstep, and the next moment a young girl stood beside him.

Her eyes suddenly sank to the deck as the student's gaze encountered them, and he saw a crimson flush mount to her temples.

"Mr. Dale, I believe," she murmured, her blue eyes still cast down.

Sidney stepped nearer her at the sound of that rich voice, and a minute afterward they were slowly traversing the deck.

"Mr. Dale," she said, timidly, tremblingly, "I came to you for aid in the hour of direst need. Your face led me to you, and I sincerely hope that I have not studied it wrongly. I find myself in a very perplexing position. Several weeks since I came to England to close a mother's eyes in death, and to receive the only legacy she could leave her child—the rings I wear. After having paid for my passage to Dublin, I find myself with no money wherewith to defray the cost of my journey home, where I earn my bread with the needle—yes, I am one of the thousands whom Hood sang about; and, Mr. Dale, if you will advance me a trifle I will try to repay you. Take my mother's rings in pledge; if I would strive to redeem anything in the world 'twould be they."

Sidney Dale saw the rings that had been slipped from the sewing girl's fingers, and one by one they were dropped into his hands. But he took them from his white palm and restored them to their owner.

"I will relieve you from your embarrassment with pleasure," he said, "but will not take in pledge the rings you value above all else on earth."

Then he felt a pale hand steal into his, and a smile of gratitude flitted over Anna Clayton's face as she looked up into his.

He robbed himself to serve the girl, and landed almost as penniless as the sewing girl herself.

They parted, never expecting to meet again; but the bread which Sidney Dale had cast upon the waters was seen after many days.

"Hark! a carriage has stopped before the house," and the speaker, a beautiful woman, sprang towards the window, almost hidden by long sicken curtains elaborately embroidered. "The 'Astrea' has arrived, and he is at the door. How easily he has fallen into the snare!" she said, as she reversed one of the slats and peered out. "Sidney Dale, I wonder if you are handsome; your letters told me you were talented."

She saw a carriage standing just beyond the pavement, and presently a young man stepped from the vehicle.

"How splendidly handsome!" exclaimed the queenly figure at the window, as she caught sight of the student's face in the glare of the gas jets. "I almost repent now—bah! have I descended to this when I need my heart most? Therese, be a woman! carry out the plans you have formed."

She turned away and took a book from the marble-topped centre table. But she did not dwell long on the poems it contained. She was listening for the silver tones of the bell, and when they at last resounded throughout the house she rose to her feet.

"He comes! he comes!"

The last words still quivered on her lips when a servant ushered Sidney Dale into the room.

The youth had reached his destination; he stood before Therese Harrison, whose *compagnon du voyage* he hoped to be to other lands.

She greeted him with the reserve yet cordiality with which a lady receives a gentleman who is a personal stranger; but the reserve or coyness soon wore away, and Sidney Dale felt that he had known Therese for years. She spoke of the trip to the Continent, flattered his youthful ambition; and more than once caught him drinking in the beauty that beamed from her raven-black eyes.

Sidney Dale was enraptured with the prospects that stretched before his delighted eyes like a vast flowing plain, and he longed to sail away with Therese and her father.

He waited by the beauty's side for the coming of her father; but Jerrold Harrison came not, and at length our student found himself shown to an elegant room which had been appropriated to his use.

At once he sat down and wrote to his old tutor, then sought the downy recesses of a well-made couch, and closed his eyes in slumber.

Several months rapidly succeeded Sidney Dale's departure from England, and yet not a word explanatory of his whereabouts had reached his guardian. I fancy that Jordan Ellis was not exercised about the silence, nor did he make any great attempts to fathom it. He ascertained that his ward had debarked from the "Astrea" in Dublin, and there his investigations ceased.

"He must have come to grief," he said, one day, in a tone of secret joy, "and I am not going to hunt for him, no, not I. If he had been alive he would have written long ago—he had promised to write to so many; but no person has heard from him. Yes,

yes, Sidney Dale is dead, dead, and the El Dorado—a tangible one too—lies within my grasp."

From the above the reader can see the nature of Jordan Ellis, to whom Ralph Dale had committed the care of his son; but the plans of the gold-loving man were suddenly overthrown like a house of cards.

A man long believed to be dead confronted Jordan Ellis one day.

The guardian recognized him with a slight cry and pallid face.

It was Harvey Dale, Sidney's only uncle.

Twenty-five years prior to the opening of our story he had embarked for Australia, since which time nothing had been heard of him. He had been given up for dead, by all save his late brother, to whom he had been very dear. And in like wise Ralph Dale had inserted a provision to the effect that should Sidney die before reaching the age of twenty-one his property should descend to his lost brother, if he returned within five years subsequent to Sidney's demise.

"But the boy may yet live," said Jordan Ellis, unwilling to see Ralph Dale's gold slip through his fingers. "I will hunt for the youth."

"Your hunt, alas! will end here," said Harvey Dale, drawing a memorandum from an inner pocket. Jordan Ellis watched him with strange curiosity. Slowly the new comer, who undoubtedly was the long-lost brother, drew a slip of paper from the book, and placed it in the guardian's hands.

Jordan Ellis read:

"FOUND DEAD.—At two o'clock this morning the river police took the body of a young man from the water. The deceased had light hair, blue eyes, and a semblance of handsome features. A letter addressed to Sidney Dale—no farther superscription—was found on the corpse; so his residence and manner of his death remain unsolved."

"Did you see the body?" asked Jordan Ellis.

"I did."

"It was your nephew?"

"Undoubtedly it was Sidney. I never saw him in life, you know. I left England before he was born; but he bore the impress of his father's manliness. I caused him to be decently buried, and I trust he is with his parents."

Jordan Ellis waited to hear no more; he resigned his guardianship, and Harvey Dale, and a beautiful woman whom he called daughter, took up their abode in the handsome residence lately occupied by his brother.

Suddenly Professor Gerwick, to the astonishment of everybody, severed his connection with the college, and announced his intention of going a journey.

"I'm going to see for myself," he murmured to himself, as he stepped aboard a vessel. "I'm going to probe this mystery to the bottom, and the probe is likely to penetrate vital places."

"There, this is an era in your life."

"Yes; but do not make such observations now. He has arrived, and the ladies in the scarlet parlour are clamoring for me."

"Then go to them, girl. I will greet him while you converse with them."

Harvey Dale and the woman he called Therese parted at the foot of the velvet stairs.

It was an era in the queenly woman's life; it was her wedding-day.

The life of the West End thronged the Dale mansion. From the gorgeous rooms floated the silvery tones of many voices.

In the joy of the moment no one thought of Sidney Dale. His picture on the wall had been veiled, and his fate had slipped through the minds of the guests.

A brief courtship had given Therese Dale's hand to a rising merchant prince and he was about to claim his bride.

At length the handsome lovers stood before the minister, whose eyes fell to the service book.

Then in the hush that followed he wedded Therese to the man she had chosen, and she felt the husbandly kiss on her brow.

The guests pressed forward with congratulations, when suddenly Harvey Dale sprang backward with a hoarse ejaculation of terror.

The cause of his fright stood in the doorway. Sidney Dale leaned on Professor Gerwick's arm, while at his side stood Anna Clayton, the beautiful little sewing girl.

Therese shrieked, too, when her eyes fell upon the student, and while they, and the guests as well, stood spell-bound in the bridal chamber, Sidney's voice saluted them.

"I merely claim my own," he said. "Harvey Dale, at another time and in another place I will tell how you, and that woman whom you call daughter, lured me to Dublin; how, crazing me with a blow while I lay on my couch, you sent me to the madhouse; how this noble girl, suspecting you, sought and found me in return for a favour I had done her;

how, nursed by her, reason gradually returned; and how Mr. Gerwick found me in her humble home. You shall confess to the manufacturing of that paragraph declaring my death; ay, you shall confess all!"

Harvey Dale did confess his villany.

Upon his return from Australia he had found his nephew in possession of much wealth, and with the assistance of Therese Davis, he, under the name of Harrison, thought to deprive Sidney of his own.

Harvey Dale was the unseen schemer, but failed. He and Therese fell into the hands of the law, while Sidney, after being wrecked on Charybdis, regained his own, and wedded Anna Clayton.

Truly his kindness on shipboard had proved bread cast upon the waters. C. C. H.

THE FORTUNES OF BRAMBLETHORPE.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE next day the excitement was even greater than on the first. A large crowd nearly blockaded the streets about the vicinity of the court, as it was understood that a decision would be reached on that day.

The first witness called for the defence was Mr. Douglass. The immense wealth of this gentleman, and the fact that he was betrothed to one of the daughters of the late earl, gave him a certain fascination in the eyes of on-lookers. He testified to the following facts.

Having understood that the Countess Rinaldini, the writer of the three letters to the late Earl of Bramblethorpe, had made a dying confession and left it in the hands of a certain Father Chrysostom, priest in the Convent of St. Paul, in Naples, and that the said priest had refused to deliver this written confession to parties for whom it was intended, he, Arthur Douglass, had made a journey to Naples for the sole purpose of getting possession of that document, and had succeeded in doing so.

He produced the manuscript referred to, and swore that it was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truly written by the late Countess Rinaldini for the express purpose of redressing a great wrong which she had committed against innocent persons. The manuscript was then read by Hawkseye, a deep silence having fallen over the crowded room at the first word:

"I, Countess Cecilia Rinaldini, believing that I am about to die and appear before my Eternal Judge, and sincerely repenting of the crime herein confessed, as well as desiring to make what earthly reparation is in my power to the injured parties, do hereby swear to the truth of what I am about to state, viz:

"That, for the double purpose of being revenged on my sister-in-law, Valencia, wife of Henry, Earl of Bramblethorpe, and of extorting large sums of money from the latter for my own benefit, I did falsely convince him that the Count Steffazzi, the first husband of his wife Valencia, was living, and would make him great trouble unless he paid him the sum of one hundred thousand pounds to secure his silence and retirement from the country to some distant part of the world, where he would promise to live under an assumed name.

"I confess that this statement, made by letter to the Earl of Bramblethorpe, was a base imposition upon him; and that I was aided in the execution of this fraud by one Marco Bellini, a companion of the deceased Count Steffazzi during his political intrigues, and who was compelled to fly in the same vessel with the Count Steffazzi, which was shipwrecked on the voyage, at which time the Count Steffazzi did, as was reported and believed, lose his life.

"Signor Marco Bellini escaped with difficulty along with two sailors. He afterward made his way back to Italy, where, because of political proscription, he was obliged to remain in the utmost secrecy; but having betrayed himself to me as a relative of the late Count Steffazzi, and appealed to me for assistance, I conceived the plan which we afterward executed.

"I was prompted to this, as I have said, by two motives. First, I was madly jealous of my more fortunate sister-in-law, and felt for her hatred and malice of which I now most sincerely repent. Secondly, the fortunes of our family were completely shattered in the Revolution of 1848, and I, knowing the vast wealth of the Earl of Bramblethorpe, thought it no great sin, at the time, to enrich myself at his expense.

"Of the jealousy, envy, falsehood, and fraud of which I was then guilty I do most sincerely repent. And I desire immediately upon my death that this confession be sent to the Earl of Bramblethorpe, with my petition for forgiveness.

"If the Earl of Bramblethorpe, having been once

so deceived by me, doubts my second statement (as well he may), I can give him the names of the two sailors who were saved from the shipwreck along with Signor Bellini, and who will swear to having witnessed the death of Count Steffazzi. They are both alive at the time of this writing, and employed on a fishing-smack in the Bay of Naples. Their names are Paulo Giotto and Peter Boem; the name of their vessel the 'Bella Isadora.'

"There is also a certain Signor Verona, if he can be found, who knew of Marco Bellini's return to Naples and of his subsequent departure for Brazil.

"The money I have spent, and cannot return; except that I make over the Villa Rinaldini to the Earl of Bramblethorpe, in part payment of the large sum out of which I defrauded him. Further restitution it is not in my power to make.

"Trusting that any evil which may have risen from the gross deception practised by me may be annulled by this my true and dying confession, I seek that repose in death which life has denied me.

"CECILIA, COUNTESS RINALDINI.

"Naples, Nov. 10th, 18—"

A low murmur of applause, which gradually swelled and grew into a deafening cheer, arose inside the court, and was echoed outside the building by those who scarcely knew why they applauded.

Captain Bramblethorpe leaned back in his seat, purple in the face.

Simmons, livid with rage and trembling with excitement, challenged the character of the evidence. At that Hawkseye proceeded to confirm it. He produced the sworn statement of Father Chrysostom that the Countess Rinaldini had corroborated, in her dying confession made to him, every word of her manuscript, and had begged him to see it placed in proper hands.

And, as if that were not enough, Hawkseye now brought forward two foreign-looking sailors, with swarthy skins and snowy beards—old men and quaint, who had passed their long lives on the water, and who testified, in Italian, of which an expert gave a translation, that they had seen the Count Steffazzi go down, and never rise, beside their wrecked ship—that his body had been afterwards cast ashore and by them buried in the sands—that Marco Bellini was the only passenger saved alive, and they two the only sailors—that they had seen Marco Bellini since, when they went on a sailing voyage to Rio Janeiro, but knew not whether he was now dead or alive.

Another deafening cheer followed this evidence, and the two shaggy old sea-dogs retired, bewildered, but happy in the knowledge that, for the rest of their lives, they might fish or not, as they pleased, for the English gentleman who brought them there gave them each a purse of gold as they went out.

Then Hawkseye, smiling, turned to Simmons, who crustily confessed that he had no rebutting testimony to offer.

Captain Bramblethorpe got up and left the court; he knew what it must be, and staggering, faint and pale, not remaining to hear the judge's decision, he called a cab and was driven back to his hotel.

In half an hour Simmons brought him the decision, which was adverse to his claim. The captain glared around the room, and his eyes fell on Estelle, crouched, silent and stunned, in a window-seat.

"Fiend," he roared, "it is you who have made an idiot of me! Get out of my sight!"

He seized a chair, and perhaps would have struck her with it, but Simmons interfered, and Estelle, mocking to the last, made him a defiant courtesy and retired to her own apartments, whence she departed, bag and baggage, in the course of the next two hours, a defeated woman, desperate but humbled.

"I've more than a mind to shoot myself!" said the unhappy captain, taking his pistols out of their case; but again Simmons interfered, and his poor, weak, frightened little wife took the case, and locked it up.

"You must get out of this country to-night. Your creditors will have you in jail before twenty-four hours," remarked Simmons.

"Where shall I go? I've resigned my commission in the army. I haven't a resource left."

"Go back to the East Indies and hunt tigers."

"By Jove, I will. I've friends there who will give me a helping hand."

"And what shall I do?" quavered little Mrs. Bramblethorpe.

"Go to—your old boarding-place," was her husband's unfeeling response.

He went that night, and he did not even kiss her at parting, he was in such a hurry to catch the Liverpool train, so as to get a steamer, advertized to sail in the evening, for the East Indies.

When his creditors came buzzing about they found the captain gone. Such of them as could took back their property, and the rest had to make up their minds to their losses.

Mrs. Bramblethorpe had not passed three days of

weeping in her modest boarding-house before her nephew came after her.

"The girls want you to come and make your home with them, my darling aunt," he said. "They vow they cannot get along without you—especially at this time, when there are two grand weddings on the tapis."

"Two?"

"Yes—I am to be married on the same day with Augusta. And we lords of the creation have only given the poor girls a month more in which to make ready. You see, you are really needed, aunt!"

So Mrs. Ex-Captain De Vere went back with him to Bramblethorpe Villa, where she lived a peaceful life for many years thereafter, her happiness only disturbed by times of mild, melancholy musing over the wreck of her married romance.

In a month the double wedding was celebrated at the Villa, with few guests and little splendour, out of respect for the memory of their father; but with a solemn joy, and a deep, pure, glowing content which could not but last a life-time.

Such lovely brides and such intolerably proud bridegrooms were seldom seen.

The marriage ceremony took place in Bramblethorpe church, its rector and his curate officiating. Estelle's face was not seen among the spectators, although her cousins, too kindly forgiving, had sent her an invitation.

As the curate returned to the rectory, after the ceremony, her father having gone to the Villa to join in the wedding festivities, he met Estelle walking in the garden. There was a light snow on the ground; the red light of a winter's setting sun shone on her thin, wild, passionate face. His whole heart yearned toward her, seeing her thus alone, fading, unhappy.

"Estelle," he said, interrupting her in her hurried promenade, "I love you still. Your more ambitious dreams are shattered. Why do you not accept my humble love? To-night, when your father comes here, ask his approval, and if he gives it, to-morrow we will be married. You have made your father much care of late, I believe he will willingly give you to me as my wife."

"Your wife!" she repeated, looking him full in the face with a gaze of such scorn and burning contempt that he could not utter another word.

Sad and very sorry for her, he passed on into the study, leaving her pacing the deserted walks through the rapidly falling twilight. His heart was heavy that night, but not so heavy as it was destined to be in a few hours.

For, while the happy young people at the Villa were rising from their late breakfast the following morning, a hurried message came from the rector.

"Had any one seen Estelle?"

No one had seen her. But they traced her footsteps through the light snow from the rectory garden, through the fields and woods, on, straight on, until they were lost on the verge of the dull, chill waters of the lake at the bottom of the Villa garden. The distracted father, even the stolid man who assisted him, shuddered as they looked upon the water lying so coldly beneath the gray winter sky.

In a short time more all suspense was at an end.

They dragged the body from the lake, the great dark eyes wide open, the teeth set, the long black hair clinging about her neck and shoulders.

It was an easy thing to imagine how, driven by humiliation and despair, she had fled into the night, perhaps had lurked about the Villa, gazing up at the gay windows joyously lit for the bridal feast, and then, urged by the dark passions of her ungoverned nature, envious of the bliss of others, or ashamed, it might be, of her own bad conduct, had wandered by the lake, yielded to the tempting murmur of its waters promising peace, and had resolved to end her disappointment in the oblivion of the grave.

Requiescat in pace.

One word more. Mr. Douglass confessed to his young wife that he had paid a most extravagant sum of money to Father Chrysostom for the countess's manuscript, but he never stated what the sum was. We chance to know that the priest started an Order and built a convent with it.

THE END.

"WARM TOUCHES."—Lord Shaftesbury told at Glasgow of his having whitewashed and painted one of the dark houses, occupied by a family in one of the foul districts of London, and a short time after returning to find it worst than ever. He said: "What on earth is this?" And the reply was, "Please, your honour, the house looked so cold and uncomfortable that I sent for a sweep, and asked him to give us a few 'warm touches.'"

THE VISIT OF THE SHAH OF PERSIA.—The Shah of Persia, who is to be our guest in the course of the summer, is, it is said, to have Buckingham Palace all

to himself. He is said to have taken a trifle of three millions sterling or so out of the Imperial treasury for travelling expenses, and there is a strong impression abroad that a fair proportion of that sum will be absorbed. His Highness is to call first at St. Petersburg, but he will not stay there longer than he can help, for there is little love between Russia and the two great Asiatic powers. He is bringing with him, also, some wonderful jewels, the emerald of Sarnasand and a diamond which is called the big brother of our Koh-i-noor. The pearls are positively to be packed in bushel baskets, and there are whole cases of ettar of roses—perhaps a not unnecessary precaution—to form part of the Imperial luggage. Mr. Grant Duff, who it is said speaks Persian with a purer accent than he does English, is to be detailed for Court duty. His Highness is to be treated with the most demonstrative hospitality, and that a great deal of vivacious London life is in perspective.

LITTLE WORDS.

WHAT a little thing a word is! It drops from the lips at the impulse of the will without an effort. Yet what is of such mighty import? What else may do so much harm, or so much good?

With a word you win a heart, or lose it; break a friendship, or form a new one. That little word "Yes" has altered the course of a life often enough; those two little words "I will" bind together, for weal or woe, some man and woman every day of every year.

Volumes have been written already on the importance of knowing how to say "No" in the right place, and yet often it is said where it should not be. And, on the whole, most people would be better off if they were more sparing of their words. We tell things we should not, and repeat it afterwards. We utter satirical speeches, and give bitter hits because our dinner has not digested; we say spiteful things often enough, and some people have said sweet things that they afterward repented. Words come so easily that we waste them, misuse them, and take no care of them. Who counts four and twenty before he speaks when he is angry? Who counts four and twenty any time?

"How awkward!" bolted from an almost bridegroom's lips, when his bride-to-be slipped and fell down in the church aisle. And those two words lost him his bride, who walked back to her carriage and went home without going through the marriage ceremony.

"Would you have me, if I were to ask you?" asked a country beau of a country belle.

"Oh, yes," said Sally, all in a hurry.

"Well, then, maybe Kitty Jenkins will," said the beau.

What would Sally not have given to have had that Yes back again!

We know of a gentleman who, on witnessing a play in which the interesting hero is ordered to execution grow fearfully excited. The hero stands on the scaffold, and far in the distance pants and staggers, quite unheeded by the executioner, the hero's friend, who has procured a pardon. He waves his handkerchief; he shouts; nobody hears him but the audience. And this particular gentleman, seeing the axe about to descend, starts to his feet, and yells, wildly:

"Hold! a reprieve!"

After which, coming to himself, those three words which have burst from his lips cover him with mortification, and he retires without waiting to see what happens.

Words, words, words! oh, what trouble they plunge us into, to be sure, from the time we say "I won't" to mamma, and are punished for it, to the time we say "I will" to the clergyman! What heaps of cross words and cruel words and wrong words lie upon our conscience, or have hurt us, coming from the lips of some one else! Many people who have never committed an act they regret are filled with remorse for words they have uttered. And the hardest thing in the world to do is to make sure of always using just the words we ought to use, and of being certain not to use too many.

Let us then guard our words, be careful of them, weigh them, and measure them, and escape as much as possible all the miseries which words may entail upon us. M. K. D.

JUVENILE LOYALTY.—A very nice trait of juvenile loyalty occurred during the visit of the Prince of Wales to Bristol. A boy ran beside the carriage, playing on a penny tin flute that now national air "God bless the Prince of Wales." We need hardly add that the boy was most liberally rewarded for his impromptu performance. Malibon used to say that the greatest compliment she ever received—far greater than the bouquets thrown down upon the stage amidst the bravos of enthusiastic audiences—

was when upon one occasion, in riding through some green lane near Highgate, and humming an air from the "Maid of Artois," two drovers stopped, listened, and exclaimed, "Well, she can sing!" Probably the Prince of Wales felt equally gratified by the poor boy's loyal music.

FACTIÆ.

WOMAN'S SPHERE.—Woman's sphere is bounded on the north by her husband, on the east by her baby, on the south by her mother-in-law, and on the west by a maiden aunt.

AN INVALID'S LOOK.—A door look has been invented by an Aberdonian which rings a bell and lights a taper on the instant that any dishonest person attempts to pick it, or it may be so arranged as to produce the light only should the master of the house let himself in late at night.

CHESHIRE WIT.—The following sign was put up near some unfinished buildings in Higher Tramore:—"Notice to thieves, a watch is kept on these premises;" under which a village wit wrote in chalk, "Are the watch a gold one? and see here, when I steals that get another one quick." Clearly he would be a repeater.

THE BANNS.

Dignified Clerk: "Are you going to marry yourself?"

Facetious Parlander: "Arrah, now, when did I ever hear till of a gentleman marrying himself? Shure there's a lady goin' to be married along wid me!"—*Jan.*

A TOUGH STORY.

Jake McGinnis was noted for drawing a long bow. One day he had just gone to get his customary glass, when he was asked for a yarn. At first he declined, saying he could not think of one; but the offer of a drink sharpened his memory, and Jake related the following "stretcher":

"You are aware," he began, "that my father did a little in the drover's line, and I very often went with him to help him. Well, he once had a hundred cattle, and about twice as many turkeys, to drive three hundred miles. They were a very awkward drove, as you must know; and as he needed my assistance I accordingly accompanied him. Well, we drove them the three hundred miles in four days."

"What's that?" said one of the loafers; "three hundred miles in four days? That's too much of a good thing, Jake. Why, that would be seventy-five miles a day."

Jake after a moment's reflection thought his statement was rather doubtful, so he said: "But you see we drove night and day."

"But," interrupted another loafer, "did you have no trouble with the turkeys?"

"No," says Jake; "only they would go to roost every evening a little before dark."

"But," continued the interrogator, "how could you drive night and day when the turkeys went to roost before dark? That's rather queer, Jake."

Jake perceived that he had made a blunder, but, nothing daunted, he continued:

"You didn't hear me out. I didn't tell where they went to roost."

"Where did they roost, then?" inquired the loafer.

"Why, on the cattle's backs, of course," answered Jake, without even a smile.

A SMART YOUTH.

Cousin Millicent (with smothered indignation): "Good-bye, Robert! Since it seems you found nothing satter than my favourite bit of Japanese enamel to drop your cigar ashes in, last night, perhaps you'll accept it as a gift! It has no farther value for me, after such desecration!"

Cousin Robert: "Tha-anks, Millicent! And if that's the way articles of priceless value are disposed of in your branch of the family, I can only regret I didn't make an ash-pan of your hand!"—*Funch.*

REASSURED.—A servant in the house of a gentleman who was a great collector of old china had the misfortune to break a valuable vase. As he was in the act of picking up the pieces a visitor was shown into the drawing-room. "Oh, sir," cried the servant, "can you tell me what this is?" "That? Why, old Dresden, to be sure." "Oh, how fortunate, sir," was the reply. "I was very much afraid it was new."

A MEAN ADVANTAGE.—A Parisian philosopher has just vacated his fleshly tabernacle, leaving the following testament:—"It is my will that any one of my relatives who shall presume to shed tears at my funeral shall be disinherited. He who laughs most heartily shall be sole heir." All the bereaved kindred are now under treatment for exploded sides and rivet diarrhæas. We cannot sufficiently condemn the action of the successful competitor—an

aged grandfather—who produced an artificial hilarity by basely inhaling nitrous oxide gas. This was taking a mean advantage of those whom it was his duty to cherish and protect.

"A JOB'S COMFORTER."

Irish Es-Major: "So, me boy, you're going to India? Unhealthy place, you know! The last station I was at coff'ns were issued with annual clothin' to the men, and kept as necessaries in store; and, bedad, I had a friend who was on firing party over a man of his company in the morning, and who fired over himself in the evening, sor!!!"—*Punch.*

CIRCUITOUS.

Passenger: "Quite the sort of weather for your business, these April showers, I suppose?"

Red Faced Driver: "No, sir, gi' me fair weather; 'cause if it ain't fair, no one gets up outside, and if there ain't no one to get up outside there ain't no one to say, 'Coachman, get yourself something warm to drink!'"—*Punch.*

A NON-CONDUCTOR.

Energetic Servant of the London General Omnibus Co. (at Mansion House): "Marbl' Arch, Reg'nt Circ'a, West-end! WEST-END!!"

Foreign Gentleman responds: "Poot me down at zo West-Endia Dock!!"—*Fun.*

A STITCH IN TIME.—A sewing-machine may be said to have reached the acme of perfection when it will work—a coal seam.—*Fun.*

A TAKING PROSPECT.

Occasional Visitor, calling to leave a card: "Family well, Jones? Ah! baby thriving, Jones?"

Jones: "Oh, yes, mum—bless 'im, he's a thrivin' bootiful, he's a-hed measles, the 'oopin' coff, an' the scarlet fever, well—an' now he's jist a-comin' round o' the small-pox, and a-thriving wonderful!"

O. V.: "Oh!—a—a—a! I don't think I'll come in, Jones, to-day! Good-morning!"—*Fun.*

PADDLE YOUR OWN CANOE.

Wife: "Well, what did Mr. Brown say? Will he let us have the money?"

Husband: "He s-s-said you'd f-f-f-and it w-w-wiser in the end t-t-t-o p-p-p—"

Wife: "To what? If you can't speak without stuttering, sing it!"

Husband (triumphantly): "To paddle your own canoe."

SERVING BOTH ALIKE.—Two Irishmen, engaged in selling packages of linen, bought an old mule to aid in carrying the burdens. One would ride awhile, then the other, carrying the bales of linen on the mule. One day the Irishman who was on foot got close up to the heels of his muleship, when he received a kick on one of the shins. To be revenged, he picked up a stone, and hurled it at the mule, but struck his companion on the back of the head. Seeing what he had done, he stopped, and began to groan and to rub his shin. The one on the mule turned and asked what was the matter. "The brutal cuthur kicked me," was the reply. "Be jabbers, he's said the same thing to me on the back of the head," said the other.

WATCHING ONE'S EYE.

"When I was a boy," said an old man, "we had a schoolmaster who had an odd way of catching boys. One day he called out to us:

"Boys, I must have close attention to your books. The first one of you that sees another boy idle I want him to inform me and I will attend to his case."

"Ah!" thought I to myself, "there's that Joe Simons that I don't like. I'll watch him, and if I see him look off his book I'll tell."

"It was not long before I saw Joe look off his book, and immediately I informed the master."

"Indeed," said he; "and how did you know he was idle?"

"I saw him," said I.

"You did? And were your eyes on your book when you saw him?"

"I was caught, and I never watched for idle boys again."

"Do you cast things here?" inquired a man, as he sauntered into a foundry and addressed the proprietor. "Yes, we do." "You cast all kinds of things in iron, eh?" "Certainly, don't you know that is our business?" "Ah! well, please, cast me a shadow, will you?"

CORONATION OF KING OSCAR AND QUEEN SOPHIA.—It has now been finally arranged that King Oscar and Queen Sophia of Sweden and Norway are to be crowned in Sweden, but on account of the proceedings in the Swedish Riksdag the expenses will be defrayed from the Civil List. The coronation is fixed for the 4th of May, the 55th anniversary of the coronation of Bernadotte as Charles XIV. The Norwegian coronation will take place at Trondheim on the 18th July, and the Storting has received an official reply to their address, which prayed his Majesty to state if he purposed being crowned before the next

session, and if so the Storting invited her Majesty the Queen to receive the benediction of the Church as Queen of Norway on the same day as that on which the crown shall be placed on the head of the King.

PARENTS' LOVE.

No love is so true and tender as the love our parents give us, and for none are we so ungrateful. We take it as a matter of course—something we deserve. Especially may our mothers toll and deny themselves, think all night and labour all day, without receiving any thanks whatever.

From the day when she walks all night with us while we scream to the day when she helps make our wedding dress and gives us those cherished pearls which she wore in her girlhood we do not half recognize her love for us. Never until we are parents ourselves do we quite comprehend it. Yet is there anything like it? The lover may desert us for some brighter beauty; the husband grow indifferent when we have been his a little while; the friend be only a summer friend, and fly when riches vanish, or when we are too sad to amuse; but our parents love us best in our sorrow, and hold us dearer for any change or disfigurement.

There isn't much of Heaven here on earth, I am afraid; but what there is of it is chiefly given to us in a parent's love. M. K. D.

THE LAST OF THE FAIRIES.

The world, grown wiser in its day,
Has vetoed many things.

Among the rest our fairy friends
Have flown on swiftest wings—
The little folk that peopled dells
And meads and flowery nooks,
The elves whose startling counterfeits
Dwelt in our story books.

With what strange awe we looked abroad,
When Cynthia gave her light,

To catch perhaps one stolen peep
At fairy feet by night;
Examined many a lily bell,
And many a rose's cup,
To find some sleeping elfin fay—
Perchance to wake it up!

But children now are wiser born,
Or wiser grow each hour!
They even doubt old Santa Claus
And disbelieve his power.
And as for hunting fairy folks
Through dell and wooded vale,
They rather analyze the flowers,
Or read the last new tale.

Then fare thee well for evermore,
Oh, tiny elfin band!
Our little ones will ne'er, like us,
Believe in "fairy land."
They feast upon the actual,
In stories sweetly told;
While here and there are woven in
Romantic threads of gold.

M. A. K.

GEMS.

DIGNITY consists not in possessing honours but in deserving them.

A HORSE is not known by his harness, but his qualities; so men are to be esteemed for virtue, not wealth.

Do the best you can where you are; and when that is done you will see an opening for something better.

TRUTH—the open, bold, honest, truth—is always the wisest, always the safest, for every one in any and all circumstances.

The least error should humble us, but we should never permit even the greatest to discourage us.

LOOK your misfortunes in the face and reflect that it is better to be accused of a vice, being innocent, than acquitted of it, being guilty.

THE RESULT OF "LEAP-YEAR WOOING."—The Registrar of the parish of Bonar, Sutherlandshire, in his report for the last quarter of 1872, says:—Marriages are greatly above an average. No particular reason can be assigned for this, unless it be, to a certain extent at least, the result of "leap-year wooing." The bridegroom in one instance was 79 years of age.

THE "GREAT EASTERN BUILDING."—Among the new plans for making the Parisian portion of mankind happy is that of a theatre capable of accommodating 20,000 spectators at once, and to be called the "Great Eastern Building." The reason for the project is that Paris does not possess any hall of such dimensions, and, secondly, because the Romans had

theatres even of vaster size; the theatre Marcellus accommodated 20,000 persons, that of Scaurus 80,000, and the Ephesian theatre 53,000. Saxe, of brass band and monster drum notoriety, is the author of the project, and it would not be surprising if he found the capital; France has no end of milliards, and is ready to invest in any speculation.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PRESERVATION OF MEAT.—Lately a large consignment of Swedish and Norwegian game was brought over in a fresh state solely by means of cold. The birds were packed in a cold atmosphere, and were closely surrounded on every side by a thick layer of skins. The result was that they came over here uninjured, and were found, after being packed for a month or so, as fresh as when they were killed. The cold in the high latitudes where the birds were killed was sufficient to freeze the bodies, and when unpacked here they were still frozen and ice-cold. The idea originated, we understand, with some Swedes, who were anxious to open up a trade with England, and had found that meat and game, packed in skins or other non-conductors, could be transported for long distances in Norway and Sweden. The simplicity of the process is remarkable, but it appears only available in countries where the natural temperature is very low. The flesh, we are told, is as good as that of recently killed birds. Some beef was also brought, and this, though of poor quality, was certainly quite fresh. Of course the skins in which the game, etc., was packed were valuable, so that there was no loss on this part of the importation.

STATISTICS.

SMALL HOLDINGS.—From the Agricultural Returns for 1872, prepared by Mr. Valpy, chief of the Statistical Branch of the Board of Trade, and recently published, it would seem that the number of small holdings in this country is on the increase. The total of those of a quarter of an acre but under one acre, for Great Britain, is 69,844, of which there are in England 67,422, in Wales 1,102, and in Scotland 1,319. Of these the number held as allotments by labourers and working-men is 50,031, of which over 49,000 are in England. This, however, the report says, is below the total of such allotments, "there being so many of less than a quarter of an acre in extent, one-eighth of an acre being a common limit." Of small holdings of from one to five acres, both inclusive, there are in England 93,148, with a total acreage of 260,620; in Wales 10,041, with an acreage of 30,477; and in Scotland 21,091, with an acreage of 65,341; giving a total of 14,230 holdings, and 356,388 acres. Of the latter, 204,000, or 57 per cent., were under permanent pasture, and 152,000, or 43 per cent., were arable, corn and grain crops being cultivated in about equal proportions. The live stock on these holdings amounted to 21,279 horses, 132,408 cattle, 219,539 sheep, 177,631 pigs. But it is added that "the sheep and probably the cattle are overstocked for Wales and Scotland, as greater numbers are returned than could be kept upon the actual acreage, and the stock kept upon runs of mountain pasture must be included."

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE "Blanche," schooner, has been purchased for Sir James Fergusson, Bart., Governor of New Zealand. She will be refitted and sent out.

PETER THE GREAT.—In the Royal printing-office of Berlin photolithographic copies of about a score of autographs of Peter the Great, possessed by the archives of the Prussian State, are being taken. These fac-similes will appear in a grand work now in course of preparation by the Imperial Government of Russia to honour the memory of the Czar.

THE MAN FISH.—A professional swimmer having failed in his undertaking to swim the British Channel, a distance of 21 miles, the philosophers who attended to witness the performance have pronounced it an impossibility. Mr. Charles Weightman, calling himself the "man fish," dissents from this decision of these philosophers, and offers, at any time during the month of August next, to swim from the Narrows to Long Branch, a distance of 26 miles.

A FATAL DUEL.—In consequence of a paltry discussion a duel was recently fought by two officers at the Cavalry Barracks at Vienna. The duellists were Count Homingen d'Ereswyl and Premier Lieutenant Quiquerez; arms, the sabre. At first the former was wounded, but then made such a terrible onslaught that he cleft his opponent's head. The survivor was arraigned before a court-martial, and sentenced to four months' arrest; but no bad endorsement was made on his officer's brevet.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. J. MIDDLETON.—Any jeweller will supply the ring you desire.

J. H.—Both are good, but we think Pitman's has a decided preference.

ROSEMARY.—Use some mild medicine, and wash the face copiously with elder-flower water.

ANNIE.—There could be no impropriety in the course you mention.

J. H. D.—The application of caustic is one of the best remedies, but it must be used with great care.

LORENZO.—Declined, with our best thanks. The story displays some creditable literary ability but is too destitute of popular interest.

LILY DALTON.—The handwriting is legible, neat, and pretty, and might be supposed to indicate—if there is any truth in the old notion—a genial, kindly nature.

E. T. H.—Your tale of "The Lover's Trial" seems hardly to possess the requisite interest, and is therefore declined, with our thanks.

E. B.—Tin was found in Cornwall several centuries before the Christian era. Hence the Scilly Islands were called Cassiterides—Kassiteros, in Greek, meaning tin.

ANXIOUS ONE.—Your inquiry seriously puzzles us. It is only how you can cure your beloved one of a bad temper. The only cure presumably is by the constant exercise of assiduous affection.

A CITY PAYSER.—Accept our thanks for your highly interesting letter. Your memory has served to correct a pardonable or venial error which has been thus far general in all the chronological compilations.

ADA S.—The lines in question occur in Mr. Algernon C. Swinburne's noble poem of *Dolores*. Follow the dictates of your own heart, which in love affairs is always the best counsellor.

R. B. B.—1. No charge whatever is made for replies in our correspondence column. 2. The rite of confirmation is wholly unknown to the Scriptures, and to the purest antiquity. For arguments, therefore, of human invention we are unable to entertain any serious regard.

SHIPWRECKER.—We like the sentiment of your verses, but scarcely like the mechanical execution. You will require a little more patient study and then you might advantageously endeavour to recast them. The circumstance, however, which suggested the poetical effort is in itself interesting.

AMICUS.—Sappho was a poetess of Lesbos, and the few fragments of her compositions that remain attest to the supremacy of her exquisite genius. Sappho, slighted in love by Phaon, threw herself into the sea—the only mode, we presume, of cooling her immortal passion.

S. T. P.—The play by Watts Phillips called *Theodora*, Actress and Empress, is strictly founded on fact. It was produced some two years ago at the Lyceum Theatre—(see Gibbon). *Theodora* was an actress and an empress, and one of the most charming of women. The like profession was adorned in more modern times by the Countess of Derby.

MARKET.—1. The salaries vary infinitely. 2. The composition of your letter is pleasant, good, and sweetly feminine, and does you infinite credit. The writing is capable of some slight improvement, but that could easily be attained. When a woman, young, pretty, and persistent, sets her mind to the task she can always surmount every possible obstacle.

E. O. M.—1. The price of a volume of the *LONDON READER*, inclusive of postage, is 5s. 8d. (United Kingdom). 2. Order the *School Atlas*, by Keith Johnston—the best and most serviceable of its kind, possessing also the singular merit of minute accuracy. 3. What order of books do you desire? Speaking generally we would say Hume, Gibbon, De Quincey, Byron, and Walter Scott. These authors are among our very best, and they are tolerably accessible to all.

M. S.—Your "aspirations" are doubtless commendable but your poetic performance decidedly fails to reach the requisite standard. We will indicate one or two serious defects. "I'll be looking up past where the star globes shine" is not admissible. The phrase would be questionable in a prose composition, and much more so in a composition claiming to rank as poetry. The word *garlanded* is not accurate English. Wing as a verb is also curious, except in its relation to the old duelling days, when, for the sake of feminine loveliness, a man used to wing his opponent.

B. B.—We are unable to use your poem called *Retirement*, while we have to thank you for its transmission. Such a phrase as the feathered tribe in its application to birds is forced and unnatural, and a truer æsthetic taste

has pronounced its condemnation. Call a spade a spade, not an implement of agriculture, and in like manner call a bird a bird, and never a feathered tribe. Verbal circumlocutions of that sort really weaken the verses which they are intended to adorn.

R. P. S.—We should advise you, as you reside in town, to apply at the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road. You will thus have no difficulty in securing the best possible advice and attention.

W. J.—The following is a simple method of galvanizing or coating iron screws with zinc to protect them when exposed to wet. They are first to be cleaned by dipping them in a liquid composed of one part of sulphuric acid to twelve of water, then well washed and cleaned in sawdust. Some zinc is dissolved in hydrochloric acid with the addition of a little sal-ammoniac, and into this the screws are dipped. They are then dried and immersed in melted zinc. After being well shaken, to get rid of the superfluous metal, they will be found completely galvanized. Many other iron articles may be similarly coated.

H. H.—The terrible explosion that occurred at Stowmarket in 1871 caused much interest in gun-cotton. It is prepared by dipping clean cotton in a mixture of sulphuric and nitric acids. If it be then abundantly washed with water until every trace of acid is removed, there will be no danger of spontaneous explosion. In the case above alluded to, the washing had been imperfect, hence the cause of the accident. The explosive power of gun-cotton, if confined, is much greater than that of gunpowder. If ignited loose, however, the explosive effect is trifling. Yet a few pounds enclosed in a wooden box will be sufficient to destroy a heavy gate or the door of a fortress. Gun cotton is largely used, dissolved in ether, to make collodion, employed in photography; also for mining purposes.

THE OLD SERVANT'S STORY.

I'm a jolly old servant, am I,

I've been here for many a year;

To do my best ever I try

By filling my friends full of cheer:

My father was in this same place,

And a jolly old servant was he;

You ought to have seen his bright face,

And heard him sing so merrily.

The stories that he used to tell

Were always worth listenin' to,

For he told them uncommonly well,

And stopped when he knew he'd got

through.

And that you must know was all right,

For some folks will talk on all day,

And keep up their talking all night,

Although they have nothin' to say.

Of course my old father fell short

Of larnin' and that sort of thing,

But I tell you, who of him made sport

Was certain to suffer a sting.

Yet he was a man of good heart,

Warm feelin', forgivin' and kind,

And he never would make a man smart

Just to show off the power of his mind.

What he did he did always so well

And he acted so cool and so wise

That the folks of him oft used to tell

That he never was caught by surprise.

But this praise I fear hardly will do,

For I'm now in father's old place,

And I'm tryin' my best to get through,

Though I hain't got the half of his grace.

For he was a man seldom found;

Though a servant he had every one's love,

And when he went under the ground

All prayed for his transport above.

So you see of my work I am proud,

Though humble its mission may be;

For my heart by cold scorn can't be bowed

While I do what was given to me. C. D.

P. P. P. MARY, twenty, tall, fair, blue eyes, and fresh colour. Respondent must be about twenty-two, tall, dark, and affectionate; a clerk preferred.

LAVRA, eighteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, pretty, musical and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, and loving.

ADA W., nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, and considered good looking. Respondent must be tall, handsome, and affectionate.

TED G., twenty-six, tall, dark complexion, black hair and eyes, and affectionate. Respondent must be fair, good tempered, and domesticated.

ELONIA N., fair, medium height, auburn hair, pretty, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, fair, and affectionate.

CONSTANCE, twenty, tall, fair, considered handsome, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, dark, handsome, and in a good position.

ALFRED, twenty-three, dark, good looking, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be well educated, pretty, and domesticated.

DICK, twenty-three, considered handsome, and loving. Respondent must be about eighteen, pretty, loving, and domesticated.

NELLIE, medium height, dark, loving, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be tall, dark, and fond of home.

ANNIE C. S., twenty, tall, fair hair, blue eyes, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-two, tall, of a loving disposition, steady, and fond of home and children.

GRAY, nineteen, tall, fair, pretty, light hair, blue eyes, loving, and with a little money. Respondent must be fair, loving, and fond of home; a sailor in the Royal Navy preferred.

LOVELY FANNY, twenty-one, a tradesman's daughter, medium height, dark hair and eyes, possessing good looks, kind, affectionate, fond of music, and would make

a good wife. Respondent must be between twenty and thirty, with money, and must be of an affectionate disposition.

G. W., twenty-five, 5ft. 6in., dark complexion, brown hair, hazel eyes, of an affectionate disposition, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty, good tempered, loving, and domesticated.

ERWIN B., thirty, tall, dark-brown hair, fair complexion, blue eyes, wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty-five, loving, and thoroughly domesticated.

CHARLOTTE, eighteen, medium height, fair, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-three, dark complexion, blue eyes, and fond of home and children.

MARY D., eighteen, rather tall, brown hair, blue eyes, domesticated, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be tall, dark, loving, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

SARAH P., twenty-one, fair, medium height, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-five, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

LILY, eighteen, dark-brown hair, blue eyes, medium height. Respondent must be about twenty-four, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children; a tradesman preferred.

LUCY, twenty-three, a domestic, medium height, dark complexion, dark hair and eyes, and would make an affectionate wife. Respondent must be tall, and handsome.

ELLEN, eighteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, loving, and considered pretty. Respondent must be tall, dark, fond of home and affectionate; a mechanic preferred.

CELIA, twenty, rather tall, dark complexion, loving, and a domestic servant. Respondent must be tall, handsome, and of a loving disposition, and fond of home and children.

ALICIA, nineteen, medium height, fair complexion, loving, and a housemaid. Respondent must be about twenty-three, tall, dark, fond of home, and of a loving disposition.

A YOUNG IRISH GIRL, twenty-one, considered pretty, accomplished, and a good housekeeper. Respondent must be about thirty, tall, and manly, amiable, and in comfortable circumstances.

HOME FROM THE LAKES, twenty-seven, 5ft. 6in., light hair and moustache, and has accumulated some money. Respondent must be good looking, and domesticated; a dressmaker preferred.

S. S. A. ELISIE, twenty-one, tall, loving, fond of music, thoroughly domesticated, and having an income of 6/4 a year. Respondent must be about twenty-seven, tall, loving, fond of home, and steady.

H. W. B., twenty-one, medium height, fair, loving, considered handsome, fond of music and dancing, is a piper in the Perth H. V. corps, and a mechanic. Respondent must be about twenty, tall, handsome, with a little money, and domesticated.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

ALFRED D. is responded to by—"Happy Liz," twenty, adk complexion, medium height, and loving.

GENTLE LILY by—"Amoro," twenty-two, dark, good looking, and capable of making a home happy.

JAMES B. by—"Hard a Starboard," twenty-two, a seaman in the Royal Navy, tall, fair, considered handsome, and fond of home.

JOHN JACKSON MC W. by—"Fanny," who in every way answers his description except that, although born and bred in Ireland she does not now reside there, but would have no objection to do so again.

W. T. C. by—"Fair Lily," medium height, and could dearly love a sailor.

MARTHA by—"T. F.," twenty-five, sober, steady, handsome, and domesticated.

TOM BOWLINE by—"Ada B.," twenty, dark-brown curly hair, pretty, and thoroughly domesticated.

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